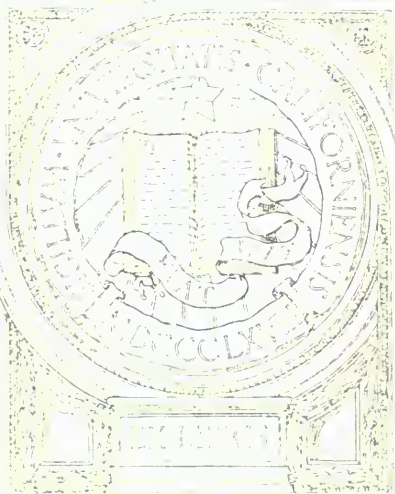


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Sp. Madan

On The DIVISIONS among CHRISTIANS.

A
CHARGE,

DELIVERED TO THE
CLERGY *of the* ARCHDEACONRY *of* BEDFORD,

BY
THE REV. S. VINCE, A.M.

ARCHDEACON OF BEDFORD,
AT HIS PRIMARY VISITATION,
HELD, APRIL 1810.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

CAUTIONS
AGAINST BEING MISLED
BY THE
UNITARIAN INTERPRETATION
OF
SCRIPTURE.

CAMBRIDGE:

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A

C H A R G E,

&c. &c.

REVEREND BRETHERN,

IT is much to be lamented, that amongst the professors of Christianity, such a diversity of opinions should prevail, not only respecting points where, at present, we only "see through a glass darkly," but also in matters more fully revealed; matters of a practical nature, where an error may be of fatal consequence to our salvation. The Jews "made the word of God of none effect through their traditions;" we, I am afraid, diminish its power by our disputes. On a careful perusal of the New Testament, it seems almost impossible to mistake the tendency of the great body of its precepts, respecting our duty as Christians. We have not only "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little," but we see those precepts exemplified in the lives of the primitive Christians, as a further security

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against misunderstanding them. They are all such as might reasonably be expected, both from the nature of man, and the relation in which he stands to God. Nothing of a practical tendency can be found in opposition to the natural notions of mankind. Such, indeed, is the purity of the Christian precepts, that they who have refused to admit the Divine mission of Jesus Christ, have admired his moral doctrines. In whatever relates to our salvation, plainer terms of expression could not easily have been selected. Yet, under the general profession of Christianity, so divided are we in our religious opinions, that we have frequently little more in common than the name of Christians. The question put by our Saviour to his disciples, may now, in his name, be repeated; "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" What do they think of me, and of my mission? We all, indeed, confess that "one is our master, even Christ;" but appear to be followers of different religions, disciples of different masters. "I am of Paul: I am of Apollos; I am of Cephas; I am of Christ: is Christ then divided?" From the benevolence and mercy of God, some have drawn conclusions which derogate from his justice, forgetful that all his attributes must be satisfied. Others have argued from his justice, almost in contradiction to the salvation promised in the Gospel. We have seen the character

of Jesus restrained to that of a mere moral instructor, and his Gospel reduced to a republication of the law of nature. And of those who acknowledge his Divinity, one contends for the sufficiency of good works without faith; another maintains faith alone to be necessary. Some deny his atonement for the sins of the world; others defend the doctrine of election and reprobation. The foundation of religion is sometimes placed in what men call inward illumination; making this to supersede the necessity of all enquiry into the reasons and doctrines of Christianity; hence, with the confidence of inspiration, man propagates the fancies of his distempered imaginations, for the precepts of Christ. Such divisions and contentions among Christians have raised great doubts and scruples in the minds of the weaker brethren; disturbed the faith of the more stable; and tended greatly to the increase of infidelity.

Various are the causes from whence come these "wars and fightings." Some are biassed in their notions of religion by preconceived opinions; and prepossession of sentiment is very unfriendly to the investigation of truth. A superficial examination of the evidences and doctrines of Christianity, too frequently satisfies the enquirer, leaving him weak and wavering in his faith, and unsound in his principles. An interpretation of some particular texts of Scrip-

ture, without considering how far the exposition is warranted from the general tenour of the Sacred Writings; or a figurative explanation, when the natural construction ought to be taken, have introduced notions very inconsistent with the genuine principles, and prejudicial to the cause of Christianity. Enthusiasm and fanaticism cloud men's understandings, and make them see every thing through a deceitful medium. Viciousness of life, and the warfare between the doctrines of the Gospel and the passions of men, leave them but little under the influence of Christianity. A confusion of mind, arising from metaphysical speculations respecting the nature of the Divine Being, and a vain attempt to reconcile the dispensations of God with the deductions of human reason (notwithstanding the Scriptures speak expressly of the *mysteries* in the Christian scheme of redemption), too often lead to downright infidelity. To these sources of religious contentions, we may add that of denying the Divine authority of the Scriptures, leaving men to reject whatever they cannot reconcile to their own opinions.

If with those who "err, not knowing the Scriptures," we deny the doctrine of atonement, the death of Christ loses all its value, and we are still left in darkness respecting our acceptance with God. If we contend for good works only, we reject the ground on which

alone they can be rendered acceptable to the Deity. If we place all our hopes in faith, we must admit this position, that our lives may be filled up with the full measure of iniquity, with impunity. For if the most weighty offences have any the least tendency to diminish our future happiness, the proposition is undeniably false, and our final reward must depend partly upon our works: I say partly, for faith is still necessary to give them due effect. But since in opposition both to reason and the whole tenor of the Gospel, the principle of faith without works still continues to be openly defended, let us trace it a little further in its consequences. The writings of the New Testament expressly state the necessity of repentance for sin, before we can be restored to the favour of God. This contrition may be known to God only, but it is indispensable; it cannot be explained away. If, however, it be admitted, that faith alone is sufficient, it excludes the necessity of repentance, since, on that principle, a man may be suddenly cut off in the midst of the most deadly sins deliberately committed, and his salvation be equally secure, as if he had been employed in acts of charity and mercy. If therefore bad works endanger our salvation, works become efficient in respect to our final interests; and, without considering *how* they become efficient, the conclusion is in favour of good works. The profession of faith in Christ,

without being attended with good works, is like admitting the truth of a moral maxim without being under its influence. Against those who hold the secret decrees of election and reprobation^a, we may also urge the unprofitableness of repentance. And this unaccountable doctrine (for the Apostle informs us, that "God is no respecter of persons") carries in itself a further argument against its admission, that it supersedes the necessity of a future judgment, inasmuch as those everlasting and immutable decrees have already pronounced our final sentence. And further, the doctrine here contended for, seems inconsistent with a state of probation, since judgment would here go before our trial. With those who place their pretensions to a Divine calling, in internal motions and feelings, it is useless to dispute. The great earnestness of the preacher is taken for demonstration of the truth of his pretensions. But upon the ground of inward illumination and external zeal, any pretender to inspiration may require belief of his hearers. Not such is the Divine conduct. For when the angel of the Lord was sent to Gideon, he did not believe upon the word of the messenger, but required some external proof of his Divine

^a See the Bishop of Lincoln's "Confutation of Calvinism," in which excellent Work the doctrines of Calvin are clearly stated, and very ably refuted; and the Liturgy of the Church of England proved not to be Calvinistic.

commission—“ if now I have found favour in thy sight, show me a sign that thou talkest with me,” and accordingly a sign was given him. God did not require belief, even in a messenger whom he himself sent, but upon the evidence of sense; for he complied with the request of Gideon, and wrought a miracle for his conviction. Spiritual pride and presumption lead men into great errors. The Jews founded their title to the favour of God, on their relation to their father Abraham, flattering themselves that this would compensate for the non-performance of the Divine commands. It is much to be feared, that a like prejudice prevails amongst many professing Christianity, who considering themselves selected by God as his more peculiar servants, judge the ordinary methods of working out their salvation, to be unnecessary.

If from the attributes of God we attempt to infer the covenant he would make with man, we shall probably fall into great errors, and be led to expect in his revealed will, what we shall not find, and to find what we did not expect. Hence, the professors of Christianity are sometimes led into unnecessary and fruitless enquiries, and set at variance with each other, in respect to the admission and meaning of it's fundamental principles and doctrines. Revelation was intended to teach us our duties,—to answer the important question, “ What

must I do to be saved?" not to explain and justify the ways of Providence. The question of revealed religion, therefore, must be examined on the ground of faith and practice. In regard to the mysteries of the Divine conduct, we find them equally in the physical as in the moral world; why then object in the latter case, when we make no complaint in the former? If in respect to the dispensations of God, we sometimes find "clouds and darkness are round about him," yet we acknowledge that "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his seat;" and thus far only we are here interested. What we *believe* simply on the authority of the word of God, ought to have the same influence on our conduct, as if the reason of the Divine proceedings were laid before us; and this consideration should remove all objections against the admission of mysteries of religion, as such. It ought, therefore, to be no objection to the Scriptures, that they contain some things which we cannot bring down to the standard of our own notions. Considering man as here placed in a state of probation, and unable to work out his salvation without Divine assistance, there is nothing incredible in the Christian dispensation; and the Scriptures represent man in such a state.

Of Dissenters from the Church of England, if we do not allow the grounds of their sepa-

ration from our establishment, we admit their claim to toleration. But here, from the indulgence of our Constitution, of those who apply for authority to preach the word of God, no testimony, either of ability or integrity of life, is required, notwithstanding what St. Peter saith, that “there are some things hard to be understood, which they that are *unlearned* wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.” Hence, of those who take upon themselves the office of expounding the Sacred Writings, numbers are found so extremely illiterate, and destitute of every qualification requisite for a minister of the Gospel, as at once to account for many of the false notions which have corrupted the minds of Christians, perverting both their faith and their practice. The dishonour thus brought upon our religion, is too plain to be dissembled, and too great to be disregarded. We wish not to encourage a spirit of bigotry or uncharitableness towards those of different religious persuasions, but at the same time we must feel it our duty to oppose such doctrines, as, upon due consideration, we judge to be false.

But let not these divisions be made a scandal to our religion; for as “no fountain can yield both sweet water and bitter,” so Christianity, being a Divine revelation, must be at unity with itself. Our religious controversies, therefore, must arise from our misconceptions of the

principles of our religion, and of it's practical duties^b. If the Scriptures were written by infallible men, it's interpreters are fallible. Judaism had it's sects, as well as Christianity; but we do not make that an argument against the Divine legation of Moses. A learned Jew, to do away the traditions which had crept into and constituted a considerable part of their religion, desired his brethren would recur to the origin of their traditions, to see on what foundation they stood. To establish a conformity of Christian faith and practice, we can give no better advice—examine the grounds of your religion. Be not satisfied till you have made Scripture, in all its parts, consistent with itself, and you will then be in no danger of falling into great errors. Make your determination from a candid and attentive enquiry into the general tendency of the whole body of the Christian precepts; let Scripture be its own interpreter; thus ye shall “do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.” In respect to the mysteries of religion, they must be considered, not as matters which require interpretation, but as articles of faith, resting on the authority of Scripture. Thus confirmed in Christianity, if some difficulties still remained, they would not be of a nature to cause divisions amongst us, and we might, “with one mind

^b See the Appendix

and one mouth, glorify God." In religious enquiries, as in other matters, God does not irresistibly interfere to prevent error, but lays reasonable evidence before us, and leaves it's operation to ourselves. It is the aim of Revelation, not to compel, but to persuade men to come in. We are neither blind through want of evidence, nor over-ruled to act upon it. A man may be under influence, without being under compulsion; to offer a strong motive, is a species of influence, but we may not be constrained to act accordingly. The more ordinary influence of the Holy Spirit, may, perhaps, be thus exerted, as not interfering with the freedom of the will. If the evidences of Christianity were demonstrative, to embrace it would be no act of choice. Left as free agents "to work out our salvation" through the co-operation of God's grace, we never want exercises for our religious improvement. Considering mankind in a state of probation, the proof of revealed religion could go no further than moral certainty, as the end would have been defeated if it had. Hence, man becomes an accountable being. Placed in a state in which he may fall, his good works become acceptable to God; but let us not deceive ourselves by supposing they will atone for our evil deeds.

How far a diversity of opinions among Christians may have contributed to a luke-

warmness in the practice of Christianity, we cannot answer; but we must all observe with concern, the great prevalence of *religious indifference*, the source of almost all the common vices and follies of mankind. It is an indisposition of mind which affects all orders of men; and may, perhaps, be considered as the most general cause of that corruption of manners which prevails in the world. Here men fall under almost every temptation; and the evil, on account of its extent, is more alarming than that which arises from the scorn of the avowed unbeliever. The cause of religion is betrayed by the opposition between our professions and practice. Unless the heart and affections are engaged in the service of God, we must not look for the "fruit of good works." *Devotional religion*, therefore, should be earnestly insisted on; it is that which exercises an uniform and due influence over the mind, and "keeps us unspotted in the world." Without a devout frame of mind, religion will not mix itself with our temporal concerns, and we shall be apt to forget that it comes within the province of our common intercourse with mankind. When the profession of Christianity is accompanied with a general dereliction of it's duties, it degenerates into practical infidelity.

From a state of religious indifference, men are easily led to reject all revelation, and pre-

tending to follow the dictates of natural religion, they, in fact, become their own law-giver; for whatever may be alleged concerning the light of nature, it is very dim in respect to our duties. It proclaims, indeed, the Being and natural Attributes of God, but is totally insufficient to point out how far his mercy will be extended to penitent sinners, or even to teach us our moral duties. Experience fully establishes the latter: and in respect to the former, pardon, being an act of grace, can never be inferred. Acting under confidence in the all-sufficiency of human reason, men conclude, if they do no injury to their neighbours; be honest in their dealings; and return the common acts of friendship and civility, that these are sufficient for every purpose, both of this life and that which is to come. But “do not even the publicans and sinners the same?” For the forgiveness of their sins, they trust all to the mercy of God; not considering, that if God could, consistently with his other attributes, extend his mercy to sins of ignorance, his justice and holiness forbid his clemency to become a sanctuary for sins of presumption. But “let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon, for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,” who teacheth us, that we have duties to God, distinct from those to

our neighbour^c. St. Paul directs us to “do all to the glory of God,” and on this reasonable ground, that our future rewards must depend on our obedience to the commands of him who bestows them. The New Testament contains a covenant between God and man; this necessarily implies some intercourse, something mutual between them; the assistance of God must not be rejected, and man trust all to himself, nor must we trust all to God, and do nothing on our part. Our salvation is effected by being “workers together with him” (Christ); the whole tenour of Scripture goes to this, and reason leads us to the same conclusion. Practical religion is morality; but we must not thence conclude, that morality is the end of religion. The rejection of Christianity necessarily supposes it to have been a “cunningly devised fable;” but in that case, it would have been made “conformed to this world,” not to “the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.” We do not create difficulties when we want to proselyte;

^c Sometimes an act has relation to God only; sometimes it has an immediate relation to man, but this is converted into a religious act, by doing it in obedience to the commands of God. Thus it happens in positive duties, where a compliance with the injunction makes the act acceptable to him who imposes it. This is perfectly agreeable to human reason and human conduct. By such proceeding, no action is indifferent to God, and thus our whole life may be filled up in his service. It is not easy to conceive that our probation could have been more complete,

and it is greatly in favour of truth, when difficulties are not concealed.

From a disbelief in “the Lord who bought them,” men are led to deny the existence of God who made them. This species of infidelity (generally the effect of what is called a spirit of free enquiry under the enticing name of Philosophy) has been introduced with great art and industry, and, we lament to say, with too much success. It has taken root, spread it’s branches, and brought forth fruit in abundance. This has not been the offspring of chance, but the result of deliberative councils, and the united labours of men distinguished by their great abilities. A deluge of impiety and licentiousness has thus broken in upon us; whilst all our endeavours to counteract the baneful effects, have by no means proved a remedy against the evil. Here men consult only how to gratify their present inclinations. Every thing the world has been accustomed to esteem sacred and honourable, is totally disregarded; the laws of God and man are equally set at nought; and the gratification of the passions must be submitted to, at the expence of public duty, private friendship, and all the strongest ties that bind men together. When a certain man put this question to our Saviour, “What shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?” Jesus answered, “Do not kill, do not commit adultery; crimes, independently of all

religious considerations, most abominable in their nature, and most destructive to the peace and well-being of society. Notwithstanding which, we daily see both of them deliberately committed under the sanction of custom and false notions of honour, and they are become matters of raillery, instead of disgrace and condemnation. Maxims are received and acted upon, which are not only in opposition to every moral and religious precept, but to every principle and feeling of the mind before it is corrupted.

The corruptions of Christianity, with the spirit of immorality, irreligion, and infidelity, being thus prevalent, we are imperiously called upon to exert ourselves in defence of our holy religion. And if with us, Christianity have not “to wrestle with principalities and powers,” yet there are not wanting opposers of our faith, formidable for their abilities, and indefatigable in their attempts to subvert it: men, who have done all which the united force of wit and learning could accomplish, to root out Christianity. They tell us, that Revelation is but a pretence to induce obedience to the civil power; that it is state policy, nothing else; forgetful, that if Christianity be necessary for the well-being of mankind, it affords a presumption in favour of it's truth; and the argument bears more strongly against these our adversaries, as they consider moral conduct to

be all that God requires. The abuses of Christianity are represented as Christianity itself, and made a pretence for rejecting it. But if every religion is to be rejected on account of its corruptions, we must set down in complete scepticism. Scruples are infused into the mind by subtilities and misrepresentations; and when doubts are once raised, the business of the infidel is in a great measure accomplished. He tells you his pursuit is truth only; and appears to lament that he can find nothing but difficulties and uncertainties in the evidences of Revelation; verifying the observation of Solomon, that "a scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not." The Gospel of Christ is affected to be commended, at the time when every art is employed to degrade it; and thus, as the Apostle expresses it, "by good words and fair speeches, the hearts of the simple are deceived." Christianity has nothing to fear from a candid examination into the grounds of its authority; indirect attacks are most dangerous. A sarcasm is not so easily answered as an argument: "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the God of Jacob." Ridicule, the last effort of Infidelity, is opposed to direct evidence, under a vain persuasion, that where nothing is attempted to be proved, there can be no refutation; endeavouring to shake the faith of the believer, by this shameful and flimsy artifice.

And to further the views of the infidel, numbers of loose and impious books are circulated with great industry, tending insensibly to corrupt the mind; and inculcating principles which fall in with the wishes and vices of men, they become a sacrifice to the arts of the wicked. And here, we lament to say, even the Historian comes forward to lend his assistance, by artful insinuations against the evidences of our religion, and an attempt to undervalue it's power, from the lives of some of it's unworthy professors. But the corrupt lives of those who profess Christianity, furnish no objection to the purity of it's tenets. When a man's practice does not agree with his professions, a charge of inconsistency lies against the man, but no argument is thence offered against the truth or utility of the doctrines which he professes. It was urged against some of the ancient philosophers, that they did not follow their own precepts; but the wise properly rejected this as an argument against their philosophy. The bounties of Providence are daily abused, but they are still bounties.

We are aware of the difficulty of counter-acting the baneful effects which mistaken notions of Christianity, and a spirit of infidelity^d,

^d If our efforts were ever necessary, it is now, when Christianity is made subservient to philosophy, and the reason of man is put in opposition to the word of God; when Atheism is openly professed and systematically diffused, and the judgments of the Lord are abroad on the earth.

have produced on the minds of the unlearned and unwary; but that difficulty should increase our activity. The great earnestness employed to subvert our faith in Christ, should awaken us into a zeal, tempered with moderation, to support the cause and interests of our holy religion. The trust to preserve Christianity pure, and promote it's due influence in the world, is more particularly committed to us. Let us, therefore, "take heed, that he whose own the sheep are not," does not scatter them; and when called upon to give an account of our stewardship, let us be prepared to answer, "of them which thou gavest me, have I lost none." The office of Ordination carefully perused, will remind us of our duties, and of the professions we made when admitted to our sacred calling. In the ministry of the Gospel, we have to inform the unlearned; support the weak; encourage the fearful; rouse the careless; reprove the reprobate, and convert the infidel. Some must be reclaimed by exposing the fatal consequences of their conduct; some by the alluring promises of the Gospel; and some by expounding the reasonable grounds of our belief. Having to encounter the infidel on the one hand, and the enthusiast on the other, let us "be always ready to give an answer to every man, who asketh a reason of the hope that is in us." The present state of the world requires all our circumspection, and more than

ordinary activity in the faithful discharge of our religious obligations. Our united endeavours are become necessary; the enemy is active, and we must be vigilant. Let us not, like the treacherous disciple of our Lord, deliver him into the hands of his enemies; nor, like those of his more faithful companions, fly and leave him there. Having put our hands to the plough, we must not look back. It was Christ who planted, but we must water. We must contend for "the faith once delivered to the saints." We must be "instant in season and out of season." We must "become all things to all men, that we may by all means gain some." When St. Paul preached to the Jews, he reasoned with them out of their own Scriptures; when he would convert the heathens, he appealed to their own writers, and argued upon their own principles. As the seed is sown in different soils, to produce fruit, the cultivation must vary accordingly. "Him that is weak in the faith, let us receive, but not to doubtful disputations." Let us avoid what "ministers questions rather than godly edifying." Let us by argument, endeavour to recover those who have been led astray by false reasoning. And in respect to the bulk of mankind, let us, by the rectitude of our lives, show them that we are in earnest. Let the precepts we inculcate, be enforced by a suitable behaviour, and the world will be disposed to give

us credit, that our belief is well grounded. Let us exhibit Christianity in our lives and conversations; remembering that we are as "a city set on an hill," and "cannot be hid." We may lead others into the way of holiness by example, when argument would only perplex. Let us not by our conduct, lay a stumbling-block in the way of the weak; nor give occasion to those who "set in the seat of the scornful," to promote the views of the infidel. One bad example may do more injury to the cause of religion, than an hundred good ones can repair. It gives great offence to the serious; shocks the faith of the weak brethren; and sinks the doubtful into infidelity. Men will have a favourable opinion of that religion, which brings forth "the fruit of good works." A life well spent in discharging the duties of Christianity, will be the most powerful argument with the unlearned, for the truth of our holy religion. "Let us," then, "take heed in the ministry which we have received in the Lord, that we fulfil it;" for "of stewards, it is required that a man be found faithful."

An important part of our duty, but too much neglected, is privately to rebuke vice, profaneness, and immorality, in whomsoever found; for here, we must be no respecters of persons. And our obligations to the performance of this duty become altogether indispensable in respect to those whose conduct calls loudly for reproof

and exhortation, and who never attend the public service of God, to hear their duties stated and enforced. Let us not be unconcerned spectators, when we see gross violations of all moral and religious duties. The Apostle says, "If any man obey not our word, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but exhort him as a brother." We must not "speak peace, where there is no peace." Speak and reprove freely, but temperately. "When," saith the Prophet, "I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked ways to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his sins, but his blood will I require at thine hand." Private exhortation is as much a part of our duty, as public preaching; but when applied, it must be done in the spirit of brotherly love; in Christian charity. And as the performance of this part of our duty requires great delicacy and address, proper opportunities and occasions must be sought for and embraced, to give due effect to our admonitions. Let us reprove, rebuke, exhort; "not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God."

Want of proper instruction at an age when the principles of religion might be engrafted so as to produce the "fruit of good works,"

frequently leads men, whatever may be their professions, to “live without God in the world.” And although the unlearned may not be able to examine and clearly comprehend the evidences of religion, yet a great many arguments may be offered, even to such, sufficient to convince them of the reasonable grounds of our belief in Christianity, and the utility of it’s precepts, and thence to guard them against the snares of those who lie in wait to deceive. From the works of nature, we may lead them to the belief of a God, and when that notion is well grounded, the truths of Revelation will easily find admission into the mind. It will not be difficult to show them, that many of the most important transactions which ever happened in the world, were foretold long before they came to pass, and thus convince them of the foreknowledge of God; and hence, that he is no unconcerned spectator of our actions. We may make them sensible of his providence and goodness, by the regular provision he makes for the animal creation, “giving us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons.” They may be taught to feel the excellency of the Christian religion, by laying before them the life of our Saviour; that he was regular in acts of prayer and devotion to God; patient and meek under the greatest provocations; humble and resigned to the Divine dispensations; that he enjoined nothing

but what he practised ; led a life of innocence ; came to call sinners to repentance, and show them the way to eternal life. That every good man was the object of his love ; every wicked man, that of his compassion. And in the precepts he enjoined, we find no marks of worldly considerations. He taught us first to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; to do to others, as we would they should do to us ; to love our neighbour as ourselves ; to render good for evil ; to praise God for all his mercies and blessings ; and in whatever we do, to do all to his glory. These things enlarged upon, clearly explained, and delivered in language adapted to the understandings of the hearers, would carry with them a strong preservative against the seducements of the world, and the wiles of the infidel. Christianity, to be practised, requires only to be understood ; it is a reasonable service ; strikes at the root of all corruptions ; provides a remedy for all our spiritual wants ; and prepares us by a life of purity and holiness here, for the enjoyment of God hereafter.

APPENDIX.

Cautions against being misled by the Unitarian Interpretation of Scripture.

THE eternal existence of God, his nature and many of his attributes, are incomprehensible to man^a. The Scriptures represent God

The consistency of the foreknowledge of God with the free-will of man, in the sense in which the præscience of God has been understood, is one of those things which has generally been considered inexplicable. The præscience of the Deity, however, may be put in a light, which, consistently, as it seems, with all due reverence to God and the perfection of his attributes, appears to remove the difficulty; whether it may be admitted, must be left for consideration. We are informed, that God spares when we deserve punishment, and in his wrath, thinketh upon mercy. He is also said to give us a greater or less measure of his assistance. When he forgives a sincere penitent, he relaxes in the exercise of his justice, for in his sight no man living can be justified. From these and various other expressions in Scripture, it appears, that in the purposes of God, the suspension or limitation of the exercise of one attribute, may be necessary for admitting the exercise of another. If God see it proper to punish a man for his faults, he cannot exert his mercy to counteract that punishment. In merely physical matters, there may be no limitations of his power; the systems of
bodies

as ONE; they also speak of Three Persons, by whose co-operation the government of the

bodies in unbounded space, may, without any interference, be extended at the will of the Deity; but in the exertion of his moral attributes, acting as it were together for the greatest good, limitations or suspensions may be necessary, to produce the best effect. When we say God can do every thing which is possible, he limits that possibility by what is fit and right to be done. Now it implies no imperfection in the power of God, that man should be a free agent, since, if he be, God made him so. In fact, if man be not free, he is not an agent, but a mere instrument, and consequently no more accountable for his actions, than a sword is for killing a man, or a falling stone for crushing him to death. But it is said, that if God foresee he *must* influence, because that which he foresees must be certain in the event, which it could not be, if the event were altogether under the direction of another Being endued with free agency; thus free agency and foreknowledge are thought to be incompatible. Here we may apply what has been premised, that if God should think proper to make man a free agent, he may suspend or limit the exercise of his faculty of præscience, supposing in this case, such to be necessary; for we here go upon that supposition. We are assured from Scripture of the præscience of God; every prophecy which we have seen fulfilled, is a proof of this. In the rise and fall of nations, in public blessings and calamities, and whatever may respect the general state of human affairs, and occasionally what may in these cases respect individuals, all these and other matters, in which the general welfare is concerned, are undoubtedly foreseen and under the direction of God; but individually, as matters simply between God and man, as what may regard his eternal state, man is undoubtedly a free agent, and it does not appear to be derogatory to God, if he here be pleased not to exert his attribute of præscience, this appearing to be
a case

moral world is carried on, all things relating to man in his moral capacity being stated as under

a case similar to that of suspending the exertion of some of his attributes to make room for the exercise of others, in circumstances where the dispensation of God may require it. But during this suspension or limitation, granted to take place, God still sees *how* man acts, and he remains equally at the disposal of God, as if he were then under his direction: Thus man is never out of the hands of his Maker, being always subject to his control, and at the same time continues a free agent, and therefore a proper subject of reward and punishment. To constitute free agency, whatever may be *necessary* can argue no imperfection in the admission, since, to accomplish an end, the necessary means *must* be employed. Here *necessity* removes the difficulty in respect to what might otherwise be considered as operating against the perfection of God's attributes. If on certain occasions, God see it proper not to exercise his justice or his mercy, we still consider these attributes in him as perfect; why, then, not say the same of his præscience? To do every thing which is proper in the accomplishing of those purposes which God may think fit to execute, constitutes perfection. With God, every thing which is proper, is every thing which is possible. When we say all the attributes of God are perfect, we mean that he *can* and that he *does* always exert them for the best possible ends. Speaking of God, possibility is always in subordination to propriety—to what is fit that God should do. God can do no evil, but we do not thence say that his power is under any control. Admitting then what is here advanced, the free agency of man appears to be consistent with the præscience of God. On this subject, however, we must speak with great reverence and caution; for after all our attempts to solve what has been considered as an inconsistency, there may be no contradiction. "Man seeth not as God seeth." In our attempts to reconcile apparent inconsistencies, we may

their direction and influence. This has created a difficulty, but it is a difficulty arising from our inability to comprehend the things spoken of. Whether the union be in essence, or in co-operation; how we are to understand the connection, or what may be the relation of the Three Persons constituting the Divine government, we presume not to form even a conjecture. Here we declare our perfect ignorance; and on this subject we wish to speak only the language of Scripture, not venturing to go a step further than we are thereby warranted; and we protest against any explanations being imposed on us, knowing how easy it is to give an absurd meaning to any thing, and then turn it into ridicule. Admitting, then, the Divine authority of the Old and New Testament, whatever may be there taught respecting this doctrine, we are bound to receive; for it being altogether a matter of revelation, neither reason nor natural religion can give us

be fighting with a phantom of our own raising. It takes away, however, the force of a difficulty as an objection, if we can show how it *may* be solved. That freedom of will is necessary to render man an accountable being, is evident from hence, that a being who acts only as he is acted upon, is a mere machine; for to oblige a being to act, transfers the action and all its consequences, to him who imposes the obligation. To adore, to praise, to give thanks, and render all such services to God as can be acceptable to him, and be the ground of reward to the agent, necessarily imply freedom of will in him who offers them up.

any assistance. We are not allowed to say, I do not comprehend, therefore I cannot believe; for on that ground we might deny the existence of God, he himself being the greatest mystery^b. Man perplexes himself with difficulties, when he should be consulting evidence to establish his belief. If in revealed religion, we reason on the propriety of God's dispensations, or in natural religion, on causes, we are in danger of being led towards Deism in the former case, and Atheism in the latter. Hence, for instance, Dr. Priestly (as we may

^b A mystery in religion, is either what we have no ability to comprehend, or what cannot be understood without a Divine revelation. It seems to be the term *mystery*, which gives so much offence; for no objection can be made to its signification. A certain man who was blind from his birth, feeling, as he said, no imperfection in himself, thought, for a long time, he was imposed upon, when talked to about the sense of seeing; but was at length thus convinced: "I was put," said he, "at a distance from another person, yet he would tell me every thing I did; whether I stood or sat; held up my hand, or set it down; and the like; whereas I could tell nothing he did, unless I felt him with my hands." Thus he was made sensible of the existence of something, which to him was totally incomprehensible. In respect to the admission of what cannot be understood without further explanation, do not *we* in the exercise of parental authority, require obedience, before the reasons of our precepts are understood? Why then deny the same right to the great Parent of mankind? When our Saviour uttered dark sayings, his disciples did not forsake him; they still believed him to be the Son of God. The "secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us."

judge from his own statement^c,) fell from the height of Calvinism to the borders of natural

^c Dr. Priestly, in his Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever, says, he was once a "Calvinist, and that of the strictest sect;" afterwards, he adds, he "became an high Arian, "next a low Arian, and then a Socinian, and in a little time "a Socinian of the lowest kind," in which Christ is considered as a *mere* man, the son of Joseph and Mary, and naturally as "*fallible* and *peccable* as Moses or any other prophet." And after all, he tells us, (*Defence of Unitar.* 1787. p. 111.) that he "does not know, when his creed will be fixed." Thus (as Dr. Magee observes) his Bible, like his almanac, is suited only to a particular season. After, however, rendering suspicious the moral character of our Saviour, we think he could not go much further. "Their device is only to put *him* out, *whom* God will exalt." Dr. P. began the study of the Scriptures at an early age, and yet when he wrote the above-mentioned Defence, he had no fixed creed. As a *natural* philosopher, his writings show him to have been a man of great penetration, expert in investigation and deducing conclusions; notwithstanding which, having studied Christianity the greater part of his life, he was not able to establish his faith. Whatever was the cause, he was no *Christian* philosopher. As a teacher of Christianity, we might justly have said to him, "Why dost thou teach my laws, and take my covenant in thy mouth?"—"thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" Difficulties arise in the *word* of God which human reason cannot explain, and in his *works*, which are unaccountable; so *God* is rejected in the latter case, and the *mysteries* of religion in the former, for the vain purpose of removing the difficulties. This is like supporting the world on an elephant, and the elephant on a tortoise. Dr. P. has given us the following summary of the system of education in the Academy at Hackney, over which he presided: "In my "time, the Academy was in a state peculiarly favourable

religion; and Mr. Hume was led to Atheism, from his inability to account for the order of the physical world. Men do not consider, what they ought seriously to consider, that in disputing against what they do not comprehend, they may be impeaching the wisdom and goodness of God.

The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians concludes with these words: "The
" grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love
" of God, and the communion of the Holy
" Ghost, be with you all." Here the Father,

" to the serious pursuit of truth, as the students were about
" equally divided upon every question of much importance,
" such as Liberty and Necessity, the Sleep of the Soul,
" and all the articles of theological orthodoxy and heresy;
" in consequence of which, all these topics were the subjects
" of continual discussion. Our tutors were of different
" opinions: Dr. Ashworth taking the orthodox side, Mr.
" Clarke the sub-tutor, that of heresy, though always with
" the greatest modesty." Thus, the most difficult and im-
" portant matters which can engage the attention of man,
" were to be decided by the wrangling of ignorant boys.
" Again, " there was no provision for teaching the learned
" languages. We had even no compositions, or orations, in
" Latin. Our course of lectures was also defective, in con-
" taining no Lectures on the Scriptures, or on Ecclesiastical
" History; and by the students in general (and Mr. Alexander
" and myself were no exceptions,) commentators in general,
" and ecclesiastical history also, were held in contempt."
" That this system of education should lead to scepticism
" and infidelity, is not to be wondered at; accordingly, Mr.
" Belsham admits that the pupils had gone beyond their
" tutors *a little too far*.

Son and Holy Ghost are distinctly and separately included in the recommendation; we are made equally interested in them all, and therefore must regard each as equally entitled to the appellation of *person*; if we consider the Holy Ghost only as an attribute of the Father, it is included in the Father. Again, (Jude 20, 21.) “but ye, beloved, building up yourselves “on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy “Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus “Christ, unto eternal life.” Here we are desired to apply to God, to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, for assistance in the great work of our salvation. And Jesus, in his last address to his disciples, commands them to go and teach all nations, and “baptize them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;” here, three persons are clearly implied, and included in the office of Baptism. A distinction of persons is also pointed out in the following text: “Through the Son we have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. ii. 18.). Further, (John xiv. 26. xv. 26.) “the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, *he* shall teach you all things”—“I will send unto you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who proceedeth from the Father, *he* shall bear witness of me.” Dr. Watts here observes, that the word *he* in Greek is *ἐκεῖνος*, which is

always used for a *person*. The same Greek word is also used for the Holy Ghost in chap. xvi. 8, 13, 14. We are also said to be created by God, redeemed by his Son, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost; distinct personal actions are ascribed to them all, and such as cannot be attributed to each of them; and to the two latter, the Scriptures have applied the highest titles and properties of God; many things are spoken of them, which cannot be applied to any created being^d. To bring mankind, then, to a state of immortal happiness, it is manifestly pointed out to be by the joint influence of three Divine Persons; and our duties to each arise out of the relations in which they stand to us. In this there is no mystery. But as the Deity is not represented as a being distinct from these three Persons, how they may be united in a common nature, or in what sense we are to understand their union, we attempt not to

^d To the Son and to the Holy Ghost are applied, the name *Jehovah* (the *peculiar* name of God), the attributes of omniscience and omnipresence, to each we are dedicated, &c. &c. Now if Christ and the Holy Ghost were not partakers of the Godhead with the Father, if they had not some communion in the Divine nature, God, who is said *to be jealous of his honour, and who will not give his glory and his Name to another*, would never have laid such a stumbling-block, such a snare in our way, as must naturally lead us into idolatry—to consider and to worship the Creature as the Creator. The consequences to which principles lead, is frequently the best way to settle the question.

explain, we pretend not to be wise "above that which is written."

In the interpretation of the sacred Scriptures, we should not suffer ourselves to be biassed by preconceived notions; all disputes among Christians should be forgotten, and we should come prepared with candour and simplicity of mind, readily to admit whatever appears to be the true interpretation. The literal sense is not to be departed from, but where the figurative interpretation can be clearly justified, the former construction being agreeable to common usage, particularly in practical matters. Metaphorical language is never to be admitted in opposition to the general tenour of Scripture, agreeably to which we must always make our determination, that being our safest guide in all difficulties. We must attend to the main scope and intention of the writer, not insist on single words or detached sentences. A text taken by itself, may be explained in a sense very different from that which the context gives it, and which the general tenour of Scripture may require. Our interpretations therefore must be made from an enlarged view of the Sacred Writings. The word of God must be consistent; and this gives the Scriptures a ground of interpretation which cannot with safety be applied to profane authors. Considering the Scriptures as the oracles of God, we must admit that interpretation only, which

exhibits Christianity as a consistent scheme, worthy of it's Author, and conformable to the ancient prophecies respecting that dispensation. Thus we "shall do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." The Gospels contain directions for the conduct of our lives; circumstances relating to Jesus Christ, his nature and character; relations of his miracles; censures on the conduct of the Jews; prophecies respecting their future state; parables applicable to their conduct towards our Lord, and descriptive of circumstances relating to his kingdom; with an account of his trial, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. Most of these things required to be delivered in plain language; and accordingly the plain, simple construction is satisfactory, requiring no figurative interpretation, the parables and some other instances excepted, where the language is clearly metaphorical. The doctrines and duties of Christianity were not delivered with an intention to puzzle; religion was not meant for the trial of a man's ability; disputes, however, are here too often kept up from the pride of the learned. The drift of every practical discourse is generally so clear, as not easily to be misunderstood; of collateral matters, the meaning is not always so plain. The history of our Saviour should be read as we would read any other history; we should not seek for figurative explanations, when the literal meaning conveys

a sense consistent with the general tenour of the Sacred Writings; and this *would* be done by those who are not biassed by preconceived opinions, and who have no hypothesis to defend. Of our interpretations of the Sacred Writings, we are told, this is inconsistent with the goodness of God, that with his mercy; and here you make his dispensations unreasonable; these therefore must be explained away, as not agreeable to the wisdom of man. The evil is, men first reason on the facts, get wrong notions into their minds, and then the plain sense of Scripture is perverted, to defend their sentiments; this lies at the bottom. They begin by considering, whether, and how far, they stand in need of assistance; and assigning to Christ a corresponding character, their ingenuity is employed in bringing the language of Scripture to support it. But the obvious interpretation of the Sacred Writings, with the generally acknowledged figurative parts, make a consistent scheme, worthy of God and conformable to his promises, which no other interpretation will; and this affords no small argument, both of the truth of such an exposition, and of the Scriptures.

The Epistles to the different Churches after they had been planted, were to correct the errors which had crept into them, and to convey further instructions relative to the nature and office of Christ and the Holy Ghost.

Teaching and explaining require to be done in plain language: for to put a different construction upon words from what they simply express, leaves room for contention, and leads to error. The Apostles, in their different epistles written at the promulgation of Christianity to satisfy the doubts of their converts, and convey to them a further knowledge of the new covenant, would undoubtedly be extremely cautious what language they used; they would certainly employ such as would be understood by those to whom the epistles were directed; more particularly, as they contained some of the most important doctrines of Christianity, not before promulgated. And this appears to have been the conduct, not only of the Apostles, but also of the Evangelists. With the *Gnostics*, the *Logos* was the *offspring of the only begotten of God*: with the *Jews*, it was the *visible Jehovah*: the *angel of the covenant*. Bishop Pearson says, that the Jews both before and after the time of our Saviour, understood it of the *Messiah*; and further observes, that St. John chose to speak of Christ as the *Logos*, because neither of the names *Jesus* or *Christ*, would reach the creation; “therefore,” saith he, “he produced a name of his, as yet unknown to the world, or rather not taken notice of, though in *frequent* use among the *Jews*, which belonged unto him who was made man, but before he was so.” (*Expos.*

p. 117.) In the Tergum of Jonathan, the words, “the Lord said unto my *Lord*, sit thou,” &c. are thus rendered; “The Lord said unto his *Word*, sit thou,” &c. Philo the Jew calls him by whom God made the world, “the *Word* of God,” and “the *Son* of God.” Julian calls Christ “the *Word*.” Tertullian tells the Pagans, that by their Philosophers, “the maker of the world was called *Logos*.” In short, there is such a simplicity and plainness in the Gospel of St. John, that it is altogether improbable he should in the very beginning thereof, and in a matter of such moment, have expressed himself ambiguously, or in any manner by which he was likely to be misunderstood. In his First Epistle, chap. ii. 2. he tells us, that “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.” Dr. Macknight here observes, that “the word Ἰλασμος is nowhere found in the New Testament but in this passage, and in chap. iv. 10. But it occurs often in the LXX. translation of the Old Testament; where it signifies, *a sacrifice of atonement*. Thus, Levit. vi. 6, 7. Numb. v. 8. κριος ἰλασμου, is *a ram for a sin-offering*. And Ezekiel xlv. 27. προσφερεν ἰλασμον is, *to offer a sin-offering*. In considering the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, John, like the other apostles, followed his Master, who in the institution of his

“ Supper, directed his disciples to consider it, “ as designed to bring to their remembrance “ his blood *shed for many for the remission of “ sins.*” Respecting, then, the Divinity of Christ, and his atonement^e, we see a language employed which was perfectly well understood. Great care seems to have been taken not to mislead in the most important articles of our

^e Some who deny the doctrine of atonement, admit that of intercession; a mediator is therefore still thought necessary. Now in reconciliation by intercession, the difficulty is the same as in that by atonement, there being no more apparent connection between the cause and effect in the former than in the latter case, the want of which is the great stumbling-block to the *philosophical* Christian. The Scriptures expressly state that Christ was the “ Mediator between God and Man,” and in every mediatorial scheme, there is the same difficulty. God forgave Abimelech on the prayer of Abraham, and the friends of Job on the ground of his petition. Here God prescribed the mediation, in which we see no more connection between the means and the end, than in the doctrine of atonement. These instances go directly to prove, that our ignorance *how* such a connection may exist, is no ground for rejecting the means employed. Dr. Priestly himself says, the only “ reason why God treated “ Christ, who was an innocent person, as if he had been a “ sinner, suffering him to be put to an ignominious death, “ was, that we might by *his Gospel* become righteous;” what here is the connection between the death of Christ and our becoming righteous?

See Dr. Magee’s very admirable Work on “ the Scripture Doctrines of Atonement and Sacrifices,” where the Reader will see all the disputed texts on these subjects very satisfactorily explained, and the orthodox interpretation established.

salvation. Dr. M. also observes, that “the
 “only foundation, on which the doctrine of
 “Revelation can be securely built, is the Scrip-
 “tures, understood in their plain grammatical
 “meaning.” We do not deny the Apostles
 ever used figurative language, they employed
 it very frequently. St. Paul, particularly in his
 Epistle to the Hebrews, uses a great deal of
 that language, and he could do no otherwise.
 He is there endeavouring to convert the Jews
 out of their own writings, and these were
 highly figurative; he was therefore obliged to
 use such arguments and language as they would
 admit, and to which they had been accus-
 tomed. We only contend, that there would
 be no *unnecessary* use made of metaphorical
 language, under the circumstances in which
 the apostles might be called upon to address
 their new converts; and when such language
 was employed, that it would not be obscure,
 nor done in an inconsistent manner. For
 instance, of two parts of a sentence put in
 opposition to each other, one would not be
 intended to be understood literally and the other
 figuratively; yet in the passage wherever Christ
 is said to “come from God,” and was “going
 to God,” the Unitarian explains the first figu-
 ratively, and the second literally; a liberty
 which nothing can justify, and contrary to
 their own practice on another occasion; “ye
 are from beneath. I am from above.” here,

they say both must be understood figuratively, *because* the first must^f. We do not deny, however, that there are any difficulties now existing in the New Testament; there are many texts, of which the learned are still divided in their opinions, more especially in the writings of St. Paul, where we find the

¹ To promote the views of the Unitarians, they have lately published what is called "An improved Version of the New Testament, upon the Basis of Archbishop Newcome's new Translation, with a corrected Text, and Notes critical and explanatory." The Archbishop gave what he conceived a faithful translation of the New Testament, without suffering himself to be influenced by any schemes of doctrine which have divided the Christian world. We are assured that the editors have adopted this translation and Griesbach's text. But the authority of the Archbishop extends only to those texts, which appear to support the Unitarian. In fact, the edition has no fixed basis. We wish not to use harsh language, but the title of the book is a deception; it is an imposition on the world, and the conduct of the Editors cannot be too severely reprobated. It is stated in this translation, that it has not been the intention "to exhibit a version critically correct in every minute particular," and that "verbal criticism had of course not been attended to in the degree that some might wish and expect;" that is, in other words, the translation is a loose one, and loose enough it seems to be. We thus notice the publication, to put the Reader on his guard; and for the same purpose we have added these Cautions against being misled by the Unitarian Interpretation of the Scriptures; earnestly recommending the Reader to "search the Scriptures," to see "whether these things be so." See Remarks on the above-mentioned Version, by the Rev. E. Nares, A.M. Also a Review of the same, in the Quarterly Review, No. I.

greatest obscurities. Sometimes he gives answers to questions he has not stated, and of which we are ignorant, and to difficulties he foresees may arise. Elliptical expressions are very common in his writings, which, however, may be generally filled up by attention to the context. He frequently expresses himself in a concise and apparently unconnected manner, and often inverts the natural order of the sentences. Sometimes he uses the oriental forms of speech, which to the unlearned, at least in these times, will be obscure. Some things which at present we do not understand, may be to confute errors that may afterwards arise. These and other matters may not unfrequently render him "hard to be understood;" and might have been intended as exercises for the learned, and an unfailing source of employment, that the study of the sacred Scriptures might never be neglected. Without any want of clearness in the writer, length of time may, from various causes, produce obscurities which require great learning and attention to clear up. Some parts of Scripture, now but imperfectly understood, may remain to be explained in a future state; a great deal of St. Paul's account of the Resurrection cannot be understood till the event takes place. That state of Existence will undoubtedly be filled up with further communications with God, and his works; and whatever information is denied us here,

may and will be afterwards supplied; for “we
“ *now* see through a glass darkly, but *then*,
“ face to face; *now* I know in part, but *then*
“ I shall know even as I am known;” as
I myself am known of God, so perfect will be
my knowledge of all things in a future state.
The duties and fundamental doctrines of Chris-
tianity, however, are related in such terms,
that to a mind not biassed by preconceived
notions, nor perplexed with metaphysical sub-
tilities respecting the nature of God, his attri-
butes and dispensations, no great difficulties
will present themselves. The bulk of man-
kind, from the general tendency of the Sacred
Writings, have pretty just notions of their
Christian duties, and for what cause Christ
came into the world. “If the Gospel be hid,
it is hid to them that are lost.” “The obscu-
“ rities in the Christian dispensation, like the
“ darkness of Egypt, blind it’s enemies, but
“ give light to it’s friends.” Put the New
Testament into the hands of a person who has
never before seen it, and is able to judge of
what he reads, and ask him, not what his belief
of the facts there recorded, is, as that must
rest upon evidence for the truth of the facts,
but what, from a view of the whole, he con-
ceives to have been the intentions of the writers,
what are the duties and doctrines there incul-
cated, and under what character Christ is de-
scribed, and we may venture to rest our cause

on his interpretation. The Prophet, speaking of the Gospel dispensation, observes, "The way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein." But our Unitarian interpreters seem to agree with Origen, who contend, that "the Scriptures are of little use to those who understand them as they are written;" acknowledging at the same time, that the generality of Christians understood them in the literal sense and common meaning of the words.

Acknowledging the Divine authority of Scripture, it must be admitted, that the Sacred Writings contain nothing which necessarily conduces to mislead us; no relations which in their general tendency can give wrong notions of the character and office of Christ; that there is nothing systematic of this kind to be found in Holy Writ; but that every thing of this nature would as far as possible be avoided. Now in the Scriptures, we have a regular succession of prophecies, beginning immediately after the fall, and continued for almost four thousand years, denoting a future extraordinary Personage who should come to relieve mankind from their spiritual bondage; we see, that a nation and family were selected from whence he was to descend, that at his coming he might be more clearly ascertained to be the person expected; that a forerunner was appointed to "prepare the way of the Lord;" that his birth was publicly proclaimed

by angels, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men;" that at his baptism by John, the heavens were opened, and a voice heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" what occasion, we say, for all this regular preparation, this magnificent display, if, after all, the person thus designated was a "*mere* man," "fallible and peccable" like other men; "a man *in all respects* like to his brethren." Can we have been thus misled by the God of truth? And yet, if we are to believe Dr. Priestly and Mr. Belsham, this is the case. Farther, Christ, by his death, is represented as making reconciliation for the sins of the world, as atoning for our sins, as giving himself a ransom for us, as healing us by his stripes. Now, is it not incredible that the effects of his death should have been thus described, if it were intended only to promote "repentance and amendment?" A studious intention to deceive could not have gone further. Again, when a person is spoken of under different titles, it is the *highest* from which we must take his character; a King sometimes acts as a General, and is then so called, but you still consider him as a King. The *humanity* and *divinity* of Christ are both spoken of in Scripture; the *dignity* of the person is therefore pointed out by the *latter* title; whereas, our adversaries adopt the former, and

on that only establishes his character. Suppose our Saviour to have partaken both of the divine and human nature, the language of Scripture is intelligible, each denomination being applied to him; but if he was "*mere man*," the language cannot be justified, as it must then necessarily tend to confuse and mislead the Reader.

In our contest with the Unitarian, we might venture to leave out (without giving up) the disputed texts on which he principally dwells, and defend our opinions upon the declarations made in the other parts of the Sacred Writings, as scarcely admitting any *strainings* that can give the least shadow of support to our adversaries; of this ground of defence we have, perhaps, not availed ourselves so much as we might⁵. They attack where they imagine there is at least some room for dispute, to keep out of sight other matters which admit of no cavelling. It is a general rule, and can be no where

† On this ground we may satisfactorily establish the doctrine of *faith* and *works*. Throughout the Gospels, *good works* are represented as absolutely necessary to procure salvation; there is scarcely a page in which this is not taught and strongly enforced on our practice; it is one of the most prominent doctrines of our Saviour; it is what he more particularly insists upon, as, without which "no man can see the Lord." That *faith* also is necessary, is agreed upon. Without, then, entering into any disputes about faith and good works, arising from certain texts in the Epistles, we may pronounce them both to be necessary. Either we must admit this, or that the Gospels are at variance with the other parts of Scripture.

applied with so much advantage as in the Scriptures, that we must explain the obscure parts by those which are more clear. That Christ came to make satisfaction for the sins of the world, is frequently stated, and under various forms; we are assured, that he was the propitiation for our sins—that he bare our sins in his own body on the tree—that we are bought with a price—that he came to give his life a ransom for many—that he redeemed us with his blood—that if Christ be not raised, ye are yet in your sins. Now, however the meaning of the terms used in some of these expressions, may have been controverted, yet the last text involves no terms which can admit of dispute; a similar text is also found in Rom. iv. 25. These texts contain a declaration in plain language, of the doctrine of atonement. Again, our Saviour says, “This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend.” This also is a declaration, unencumbered with any terms which can give occasion for controversy, that the death of Christ hath, some how or other, operated to procure our salvation. In conformity with this, the Apostle says, “for scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man, one would even dare to die: But God commendeth his love to us, in that whilst we

“ were sinners, Christ died for us.” On this Macknight (Rom. v. 7, 8.) says, “ the dying, “ *ὑπερ*, for a just man, and for a good man, “ is here evidently dying in their room or “ stead. And therefore Christ dying, *ὑπερ ημων*, “ for us, hath the same meaning.” And he further observes, that “ Raphelius in his note “ on this verse, from Xenophon, hath shown, “ that the phrase *died, ὑπερ, for us*, signifies, “ died in our stead.” Jesus Christ is expressly stated to be the *Saviour* of mankind; but by imposing further duties upon us, had he taught the necessity of repentance only, doing nothing to render it efficacious, he would *not* have been the *Saviour* of the world; on the contrary, he would have increased the difficulty of working out our salvation, and our “ last state would have been worse than the first.” To whom much is given, of him much will be required. *How*^h the sufferings of Christ operated to procure

^h Though we cannot say *how* they operate, it implies no contradiction to suppose they *may* so operate; and this, without solving the difficulty, is sufficient to do away it's effect as an objection. In human judicature, a man is punished for the sake of deterring others from offending; and this is allowed to be a wise and necessary provision. This is strictly a vicarious punishment, not indeed similar to that of Christ suffering for the sins of the world, for Christ died to take away sin; man dies to prevent it's commission. In both cases, however, one person suffers for the benefit of another. And it may be observed that it implies no contradiction, that in a union of the divine and human natures, the latter may suffer without the former.

man's redemption, we hazard no conjecture; we do not undertake to show the connection of cause and effect; but if Christ be not a Divine person; if he did not die for our salvation; if he be not our advocate with the Father, we may venture to assert, that the greater part of the New Testament is not only unnecessary, but is all a delusion, and one of the greatest deceptions ever imposed on the world.

In our interpretation of particular texts, or when we venture to maintain any opinions, we must remember that we are answerable for all the consequences which may thence be deduced. Let us then, before we promulgate our doctrines, seriously consider, what inferences can be drawn from them, and whether they may not be turned against ourselves. But our adversaries seem to look no further than the point which upon the occasion they want to establish, unmindful how far their principles may agree with other parts of Scripture, or even with their own opinions elsewhere delivered. Dr. Priestly admits the redemption by Jesus Christ, but says, it was brought about by the Gospel, as promoting repentance and reformationⁱ. Granting the plan of redemption

ⁱ Dr. P. in his *Notes on the Scriptures*, says, "Nor did his (Christ's) sacrifice consist of such animals as were slaughtered for this purpose in the earthly sanctuary, but of himself. And having offered his own blood, by which a real
" and

here contended for, John the Baptist was also our redeemer; for he was sent by God to preach repentance and the remission of sins, and urged his hearers to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. The Apostles also may lay claim to the same title, as it was left for them to give such further instructions, as circumstances might require. Here Dr. P.'s scheme proves too much. Further, on this ground of redemption, how could the coming of Christ operate to the benefit of those who lived before he came, or who never heard his name? How could Christ be said to "have died for all?" Here it proves too little. And we may ask, where, in this case, is the *mystery* of our redemption? Such are the consequences of interpreting Scripture, without considering what may be the whole bearing of the exposition. The Doctor says (*Notes on the Scriptures*) Jesus did not teach any thing properly *new*; Jesus himself says the contrary, "a *new* command-

"and *not* an *emblematical atonement* was made, he entered "into the Holy of Holies, which is Heaven" — "As it is "sufficient for men in general to die once, before the general "Judgment, so Jesus died only once to *atone* for the sins of "his followers, who expect his second coming, not for the "purpose of offering himself any more, but in a state of "glory, which he will share with his disciples." How is this consistent with the above-mentioned scheme of redemption, or with Christ's having made *no* atonement? It looks as if the Doctor, near the close of his life, had changed his opinion respecting the office of Christ.

ment I give unto you, that ye love one another;” he taught *universal* benevolence and charity—“ what *new* doctrine is this ? ”

Dr. Priestly also asserts, that “ the declarations of Divine mercy are made without reserve or limitation to the truly penitent, throughout *all* the books of Scripture, without the *most distant hint* of any regard being had to the *sufferings* or *merit* of *any being whatsoever.*” We hardly know in what decent terms to speak of this very extraordinary *assertion*; to say that there is not the *most distant hint* is certainly *false*; the plain language of Scripture is in direct opposition to it; he may dispute the interpretation, but that very dispute makes against him. We may, however, here set the Doctor in opposition to himself; for he says, “ this prophecy *seems* to represent the death of Christ in the light of a *sacrifice for sin.*” Dr. P. further says, that “ Christ being a man who suffered and died in the best of causes, there is nothing so very different in the *occasion* and *manner* of his death from that of others who suffered and died after him in the same cause of Christianity, but that *their* sufferings and death may be considered in the same light as *his.*” (*Theol. Res.* vol. I. p. 39.) We might have asked the Doctor if there was nothing *attending* his death, very different from whatever attended the death of any other person; for it is here

not *fair* to leave out any circumstances, although it may be *convenient*. There was darkness over all the land for three hours; the earth quaked; the rocks were rent; the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Did such extraordinary circumstances ever attend the death of any other person? Further, our Saviour's own words directly contradict Dr. P.—“*ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?*” —“*thus it is written, and thus it behoveth Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day.*” These words imply, that there were great and indispensable reasons for his death and resurrection; something very different in the *occasion*, from the death of every other person. Mr. Belsham admits that Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, but says, “as we are ignorant where he resides, and how he is engaged, there can be no proper foundation for *religious addresses*^k to him, nor of

^k As in Mr. B.'s scheme of Christianity, there appears to be no ground for our religious addresses to Christ, so, in conformity with this, he proposes an abolition of the Sabbath, representing it as *destructive of religion and morality*. He *affirms* that the Christian religion has not appointed a day for the purpose of Divine worship; nay, that it has *expressly abolished* such a distinction of days. If our Saviour abolished the observance of the fourth commandment, we may ask Mr. B. what part of the New Testament contains this *express* abolition.

“*gratitude for favours received, nor of confidence in his future interposition* in our behalf.”

Does then the knowledge of *where* a person resides, entitle us to his favours? On this ground we might deny the Providence of God. Mr. B. describes the Gospel to be nothing more than the Deism of the French Theophilanthropists, except in the fact of the death and resurrection of Christ, which, he says, “*has proved to us the certainty of a future life.*” No such thing; that a man *may* be raised from the dead, and that he *will* be raised, are two different things; Christ’s own resurrection, or that of those whom he raised from the dead, prove the former; but we must have his word, and we *have* his word, for proof of the latter. His death was therefore intended to answer some other purpose, important undoubtedly; and the Scriptures tell us what that purpose was—to make atonement for the sins of the world: Here is an object most worthy of such a sacrifice; and if we reject this, we can assign no adequate reason for his death. The other purposes for which he came into the world, might

abolition. Christ says he came *not to destroy* the law and the prophets, but to *fulfil* them. In confirming the moral laws of Moses, the decalogue was necessarily included; and to confirm that which is already appointed, has all the effect of an original appointment. If the laws which Christ came to fulfil, did not include the decalogue, we are then equally set free from the restraints of all the commandments.

have been accomplished without it; he might have taught us our duties, promised us the assistance of his Holy Spirit to enable us to work out our salvation, raised certain persons from the dead to show the possibility of our resurrection, proclaimed a state of immortality, ascended into heaven, and there became a Mediator between God and man. May we, then, not ask our adversaries, for what purpose it “*behoved* Christ to suffer?”

To support the doctrines of the Unitarian, figurative expressions are resorted to, whenever the literal meaning stands in his way; but even this will not always be sufficient; for Dr. Priestly, in his *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, makes this confession: “In this
 “ then let us acquiesce, not doubting but that,
 “ though not perhaps at present, we shall in
 “ time be able without any *effort or straining*,
 “ to explain all particular expressions in the
 “ apostolical epistles;” an indirect acknowledgement that he has sometimes been obliged to *strain* the Scriptures for the support of his opinions. When he is hard pressed to defend an hypothesis, “he will *suppose* the verse in question (*John vi. 62.*) to be an interpolation, or the apostle dictated one thing, and his amanuensis wrote another.” Sometimes the Apostles are charged with misleading us. The two principal passages relating to the intercession of Christ, are *Rom. viii. 34.* and *Heb. vii. 25.*

Here Mr. Belsham says, it is difficult to ascertain the exact import of the phrase, for “*probably* the writers themselves annexed to it no very distinct ideas.” We had, however, rather trust the authority of Scripture, than Mr. B.’s “*probably.*” When the meaning of a text making against the Unitarian, is too plain to be controverted, the sacred writers are charged with producing “*lame accounts, improper quotations, and inconclusive reasonings.*” (*Dr. P.’s Twelfth Let. to Mr. Burn.*) And in the Doctor’s Notes on Scripture, he cautions us not to look on the Apostles as inspired writers, but like other writers, liable to inaccuracies and imperfections. Admitting all this, what confidence can we have in the Sacred Writings, and what doctrines may not thus be supported¹?

¹ Without entering into any dispute respecting the nature of Christ, considering him as a person appointed by God to give man a more perfect knowledge of his duties, to promulgate a future state, and on what terms we may obtain eternal happiness; and that in the execution of this office, he chose certain persons to assist him, to be witnesses of what he said and did, to record those things, and to give, after his departure, such further instructions as might be judged necessary; granting, we say, this as the appointment of God, we are bound in reason to conclude, that God would not suffer them to record any thing relative to those matters, but what was true. The *rational* Christian must allow this. That in other respects they had the common failings of mankind, they themselves have assured us. But when employed by God to record what was necessary for us and for
our

And it is further declared, that whatever in Scripture supports any thing but their own system, is either “ interpolation, omission, mistranslation, false reading, or erroneous interpretations;” by this they get rid of all orthodoxy, and by such means, they would be great bunglers if they could not. Dr. Priestly confesses the literal meaning of “ before Abraham was, I am,” is, that Christ lived before Abraham, and that the Jews so understood it, but that our Saviour did not intend his words to be understood in that sense; that is, our Saviour put a gross imposition on the Jews. Mr. Belsham, however, and Dr. Carpenter acknowledge, that “ upon supposition Christ’s pre-existence and superior nature are true, the Scripture expressions will justify the supposition.” Must not Mr. B. therefore stand condemned on his own evidence, for grossly abusing the established clergy for defending that interpretation, which he himself allows the language of Scripture will justify? He talks about thousands of the Established Church who think with him, but are deterred by secular

our salvation, it would be the height of impiety to suppose he would suffer them to make a false statement to the world. We may dispute the meaning of certain parts of Scripture, and what is genuine; but it can never be admitted that the Apostles, appointed by God to reveal his will, actually recorded or taught any *doctrine* that was false; and yet this charge is brought against them by our opponents.

considerations, from avowing their real principles—that our public teachers laugh in their sleeves, and some of them of lawn, at those doctrines which they inculcate from the pulpit, with a pretended earnestness—of interested clergy who hold their own doctrines in contempt, &c. We may here tell Mr. B. that as he is not keeper of the consciences of the clergy, he may be bringing against them, accusations of the most serious nature, which, for any thing he knows to the contrary, may be *totally false*. This is a specimen of his *pure* and *rational* Christianity, which, he complains, “is so far from meeting with public encouragement in England, that it is in a state bordering upon persecution.” Now, although the law may not have provided a punishment for false accusations of this general nature, yet Mr. B. should remember, that the *immorality* of such an act is not thence done away; *that* remains in full force against him. Christian charity not only speaketh no evil, but it goes further, it “*thinketh* no evil.” The Apostle says, “Who art thou that judgest another?”—“if any man among you seem to be contentious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart. that man’s religion is vain”—“speak not evil one of another”—“Brethren, these things ought not to be so.”

The Unitarian writers acknowledge the passages in the beginning of St. Matthew and

St. Luke relating to the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ, are to be found in *all* MSS. and versions now extant; and the other texts which they reject, are such as militate against their opinions. Now it creates a strong suspicion of the mangling and accommodating of Scripture to the support of their own sentiments, when all those parts of the Sacred Writings which are in opposition to their tenets, are disputed or rejected as wanting authority, and the other parts admitted; and it is more remarkable, as they grant the passages here alluded to, are to be found in all the existing MSS. and versions, of which the *Syriac* was made about the beginning of the second century, and the *old Italic* about the middle. Upon the principle on which certain parts of the New Testament are here rejected, we might reject all the Gospels, part of St. Luke excepted, and several of the Epistles; the principle therefore leads to prove too much. The disputes among Christians had nothing to do with the establishment of the canon; all the compilers were concerned about, was, to fix what were apostolical writings; and at *this time* we can have no authority to alter this canon, inasmuch as they who framed it, must have had authorities for what they did, of which we are ignorant, and of which they would avail themselves, “forasmuch as *many* had taken in hand to set forth in order, a declaration of those things

which are most surely believed amongst us." What *we* know concerning the opinions of the primitive Christians, the compilers of the canon knew; and they were necessarily acquainted with a great deal, of which we are ignorant. All our present determinations, therefore, respecting what ought to be received as the word of God, must be of authority inferior to that on which the canon was founded, and consequently to be rejected. Without entering into any enquiry concerning the opinions of the primitive Christians respecting the Divinity of our Saviour, we may observe, that whatever their sentiments might be, of themselves they are of no authority, and to be received so far only as they are confirmed by Scripture; and yet they are brought forward as settling the question. The Apostles themselves tell us, that in their days, false teachers had gone abroad in the world, men "denying the Lord that bought them," and that *many* should "follow their pernicious ways;" accordingly we find that some of the Epistles were written principally to correct the errors of those who called themselves Christians, and yet from such we are to receive our articles of faith. The sentiments of the primitive Christians, therefore, may lead us into great errors, and consequently are to be received with caution. As *different* opinions respecting Christ were very early maintained, some contending for his humanity only, some

for his divinity only, and some for both, why select one opinion and reject the rest? As both the humanity and divinity of Christ were professed, it would be more reasonable to conclude, that the Apostles taught both, and that one or the other was rejected, according to the difficulties which presented themselves. This would be the fairest conclusion we could draw from the premises; but although this conclusion is what we contend for, we do not admit it on the ground here stated, but on the authority of Scripture. The writings of the ancient Christian Fathers are frequently more valuable for the circumstances and facts they have recorded, than for their opinions.

When we are informed that “the wisdom of man is foolishness with God”—that “God’s ways are not as our ways”—that “man seeth not as God seeth;” these and such like expressions were undoubtedly intended to caution man not to give judgment on God’s dispensations. Yet objections are levelled against the “secret things of God;” against the mysteries of some, and the utility of others. Nothing is admitted but what can be accounted for; and yet the evidence for the credibility of the mysteries in religion, is of the same authority as that for the belief of the other parts of the Sacred Writings. This shows, that the ground of objection lies, not in the evidence, but in the fact: accordingly, the language of Scripture is

strained to bring it down to the standard of human comprehension and human reason. You may as well object to the positive duties of religion, as to its mysteries; in both cases, it is submitting our understandings to the will of God. We see, however, one use of mysteries; they teach us humility, and answer as trials of our faith in God, that the means he employs are the best. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." In a future state, we may be able to comprehend the mystery of our redemption, I mean, the connection of cause and effect. "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." In pardoning the sinner, God has proposed a way in which "mercy and truth shall meet together." He is offended, and he must offer the terms on which pardon will be granted. But man rejects this, and makes his own terms; he goes and demands his pardon. Mrs. Barbauld asserts, that "when such a man as Dr. Price is about to resign his soul into the hands of his Maker, he ought to do it, not only on a reliance on his mercy, but his *justice*;" and Mr. Belsham says, "there is a *preponderance* of virtue, even in characters contaminated with the *grossest* vice^m." Thus man, without any

^m Mr. B. tells us, that the doctrine of philosophical *necessity* supersedes *remorse*. This is a comfortable doctrine, but it may not carry him quite up to the point he wishes. A
watch

claim to a state of future happiness, expects it as a matter of *justice* from God; he refuses all atonement, all intercession, all application to the throne of grace in his favour. Like Naaman, he must be saved his own way, or he will not accept the offer. It should be here considered, that we know nothing of God's purposes, but what he has been pleased to reveal. Now it may be asked, has he any where in Scripture told us, that of ourselves we are able to work out our salvation? It will not be said that he has; on the contrary, we are expressly told, that "when we have done our duty, we are unprofitable servants"—that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And yet our own sufficiency is assumed, as if it were equally clear as any axiom of Euclidⁿ. We are told, that to repent and amend is all that a man can do, and therefore all that God can require of the sinner, since he can do no

watch acts on the principle of *necessity*, but on account of the *badness* of its *works*, it goes wrong, and wants the hand of a master to correct it. Directed by the same principle, Mr. B. may therefore want something to make *him* go right, beyond what his own powers can supply. In denying the intercession of Christ, he acts at least consistently; for where there is no freedom of will, it does not appear that man can be an accountable being, and if not, he can require no intercessor.

ⁿ Mr. Boyle observes, that "all we can give God, are like pepper-corns to a landlord, acknowledgements that we hold all we have, under him."

more; but it does not thence follow, that it is *all* that may be *requisite* to save him; that is another question, and in Scripture we find it resolved; there we are informed, that the death of Christ procured our salvation. But to the Unitarian, as to the Greeks, the cross of Christ is foolishness, and he must have his own scheme of redemption. Thus, “my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”

In respect to the objection made to the dignity of the person sent to procure remission of our sins, we may observe what has been already insisted upon, that under whatever character the Scriptures speak of him, this we are bound to believe. If he be described as the Son of God who descended from heaven to take on him our nature; if it be said, that he was “with the Father before the worlds were created;” that “all things were made by him;” that God has appointed him “heir of all things;” that he is “the brightness of his glory, and express image of his person;” if, we say, he be thus described, we are bound to receive him as a Divine person, and under the character by which he is represented; if we do not, we form our opinion against evidence. Of the various means which might have been employed for accomplishing our redemption, God alone

could judge which was most proper; in that, however, which he *has* chosen, the means appear, in several respects, to be very conducive to the great end proposed. Considering the Christian dispensation as including the whole race of mankind; that it operates even for the benefit of those who never heard the name of Christ; and that “there is no more sacrifice for sin,” we are not to wonder that it should contain some things “hard to be understood.” Looking upon it as the last covenant between God and man, it necessarily required circumstances of a very extraordinary and affecting nature, to give it its due force. And surely none could be of greater solemnity than that which was adopted; none more likely to produce general and lasting effects, since he who came to offer the terms of our salvation, and to die for our sins, is now making intercession for us in heaven; and coming at the end of the world as our Judge, will be mercifully disposed, inasmuch as he has been “touched with the feelings of our infirmities.” The arm of Christ is ever stretched out to save us, and nothing more powerful could perhaps be devised to keep us steady in the discharge of our duties. The previous dispensations of God had been proclaimed by man, who, as they principally respected this life, was considered as sufficient to promulgate the Divine commands; but the bringing of “life and immortality to

light," was thought fit to be entrusted only to his Son; the importance of the office justified the mission of the high Personage, by whom the glad tidings were revealed. In every dispensation, the dignity of the person employed to proclaim it, corresponded to it's consequence; when the dispensation had respect to our present state only, the promulgation was made by man; but when it regarded an heavenly inheritance, the Revelation was made by a Divine messenger, as alone qualified to give it due effect. Moses died, his power ceased, and the religion of the Jews became at length "of none effect;" but the Christian religion is constantly under the guardianship of it's great Founder, and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The Jewish dispensation, although it answered all the intended purposes of Divine Providence, is a melancholy instance of the inefficacy of the word of God over the human mind, when entrusted to man for it's support; and shows, that that religion which was to continue efficient to the end of time, required the protection of a Superior Being.

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ERRATUM. P. 44. line 5. for "contend," read "contends."

THE
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Sp. Madan

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IN
TWO DISCOURSES
PREACHED *before the* UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE.

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BY

THE REV. S. VINCE, A.M. F.R.S.

ARCHDEACON of BEDFORD, and PLUMIAN PROFESSOR of ASTRONOMY
and EXPERIMENTAL PHILOSOPHY.

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1809.

TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND
GEORGE,
LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

MY LORD,

WHEN Christianity is attacked by the arguments of the philosopher, and the scoffs and ridicule of the weak, it behoveth us “to give a reason of the hope that is in us.” A superficial examination of the evidences of Christianity, the vanity of controverting established opinions, or viciousness of life, generally operate as reasons for opposing the truths of the Gospel; but whatever be the motive, it is commonly attended with a total indifference to the great end of religion—a due preparation for a future state. Reflection upon the

DEDICATION.

construction of the universe, and the nice laws by which the material world is governed, is the only thing which can bring a man back from Atheism, to the belief of a Supreme Being; and when the mind is satisfied of a Providence, the evidences of the Christian religion will find an easy admission; the defect not lying in the evidence, but in a previous disposition of the mind to receive it. Little, therefore, remains, but earnestly to exhort Unbelievers to consider the grounds of our belief, with that attention which the importance of the subject demands. These Discourses are, therefore, published, not as an attempt to place the evidences of our religion in a new point of view, but principally to state and consider (what I conceive to be) the only true principle upon which Mr. HUME'S argument against the credibility of

DEDICATION.

Miracles, can be satisfactorily answered. If the reasoning be admitted, the conclusions deduced will justify our belief of the Gospel dispensation.

The high situation of your Lordship in the Church, your zeal for the interests of religion, and unremitting attention to the welfare of it's ministers, would have induced me to dedicate these Discourses to your Lordship, had I not been influenced by motives of private obligation.

I am, My Lord,

Your Lordship's very obliged,

and most obedient

humble Servant,

Cambridge,
Feb. 27, 1800

S. VINCE.

S E R M O N I.

2 PET. I. 16.

We have not followed cunningly devised fables.

I F the Christian Religion be of Divine origin, and intended, from it's first promulgation, to be a law for future ages, it's evidence will undoubtedly rest upon proofs at all times sufficient to produce conviction; otherwise, we must suppose that God requires belief, without reasonable evidence to command it. Now, as we have not direct proof of it's truth from the evidence of our senses, our conviction must arise from the superior excellency of it's doctrines, and the consistency of it's different parts; and from the authenticity of the testimonies in support of the facts recorded in the New Testament, more particularly of the miracles said to have been wrought by the first promulgators of Christianity. In respect to the *former*, as it is not our design to examine, how far it tends to

establish the credibility of the Christian dispensation, we shall only observe, that the New Testament offers an unexceptionable system of religion and morality; confessedly more perfect than the wisest Heathens ever taught, and perfectly agreeable to what we might expect from the attributes of God, and the relation in which he stands to man. But, in addition to the evidence arising from the purity of our religious precepts, we are informed, that the first preachers of Christianity wrought many public miracles in confirmation of their Divine mission^a. The times and places in which they were performed, and the names of the persons who were the subjects of their operations, being recorded, the facts became liable to the most critical investigation; and their authenticity might have been immediately confuted, had they not been true. But the first enemies of our religion did not deny that Jesus Christ and his Apostles wrought the miracles attributed to them, and therefore they opposed Christianity upon other grounds.

^a Christianity was embraced on the allegation of miracles; but it would be inconsistent with *the acknowledgement of God and his providence**, to admit great revolutions in the moral world to be brought about by *false* miracles and *lying wonders*: it would be setting up a power in opposition to himself. On this ground we might reasonably conclude, that the miracles upon which Christianity was founded, were really performed.

* See the Fourth Remark.

If the Christian Religion had been “the work of man,” the imposition might have been easily exposed, by showing that the miracles, said to have been performed, were not performed; and as it’s first adversaries, if Christianity had been an imposture, could have done this, but did not, they virtually acknowledged their authenticity. A late eminent Writer, however, has attacked this evidence in favour of Christianity, endeavouring to prove, that the miracles, said to have been wrought in it’s confirmation, cannot be rendered credible; and as an attempt to destroy this evidence, is an attack upon the fundamental support of Christianity, we shall endeavour to show that his arguments are inconclusive.

The substance of his argument is this. “Experience is our only guide in matters of fact. A variable experience gives rise to probability; an uniform experience amounts to full proof. Probability supposes an opposition of experiments or testimonies, and the force of the superior evidence is their difference. Our belief arises from the observation of the veracity of human testimony, and of the usual conformity of facts to the reports of witnesses. If the fact attested be marvellous, or such as has seldom fallen under our observation, there is a contest of two opposite experiments, and the credibility

for one or the other is only their difference. If the fact affirmed be miraculous; if besides, the testimony considered apart amounts to an entire proof, then there is proof against proof, of which the stronger must prevail by their difference. A miracle is a violation of the law of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined, and therefore cannot be destroyed by any proof from testimony. A miracle, therefore, can never in any degree be rendered credible." This is our Author's reasoning; and we propose to examine, how far it is conclusive.

Let us first consider, what are the circumstances that induce us to believe a related fact, or upon what our determination rests. *For* the credibility, there will be, the number of witnesses, and their reputation for veracity; that they had no motives to deceive, and had abilities to judge of the truth of what they related; that there was a power in the agent to accomplish the act, said to have been performed, and a cause sufficient to justify it; that there are monuments of it which commenced at the time of the fact, and that the other parts of the history with which it is connected, are true: *Against* the credibility (according to our Author), the

want of experiencing similar facts, and the extraordinary nature of the facts themselves. Now in estimating the credibility of a fact, it is manifest, that we must attend to *all* these circumstances, otherwise we can deduce no conclusion on which we can depend.

By the laws of nature^b, we mean those laws by which the *moral* and *physical* worlds are governed; the *former* of these we shall here have occasion principally to consider, the present question respecting altogether the *moral*

^b As our views of nature are but of small extent, the laws of nature thence deduced, must be subject to imperfection. We are accustomed to consider events as taking place under a law, when they return at fixed intervals, or we can pronounce that they will happen some time or other. The seasons return at regular periods, from a law of the Earth's motion. Because "it is appointed for all men once to die," we say, death is a law of our nature; for although the time is uncertain, the event is considered as certain. The laws of nature, therefore, have not always respect to regular periods of time. Trains of causes may sometimes counteract each other, and sometimes conspire, thus producing events apparently under no direction, which *are* under direction. The motions of the heavenly bodies are subject to apparent irregularities; but it is now proved, that in a very long course of time, all these supposed irregularities will return at regular periods, and therefore are not anomalous. It would have taken many thousands of years, simply from a view of passing events, to have discovered that these seeming irregularities are under the direction of a law. We should therefore be extremely cautious in affirming merely from experience, what may or may not be a law of nature. And if this caution be necessary in physical events, it must be much more so in moral ones, where the plan of God's government is still further out of our sight.

government of God — a consideration entirely neglected by our Author, in estimating the credibility of miracles. Examining the question upon this principle, it is manifest, that the extraordinary nature of the fact is no ground for disbelief, provided such a fact, in a *moral* point of view, was, from the condition of man, become necessary; for in that case, the Deity, by dispensing his assistance in proportion to our wants, acted upon the same principle as in his more ordinary operations. For whatever the *physical* effects may be, if their *moral* tendency be the same, they form a part of the same moral law. Now in the events called miraculous, the Deity is influenced by the same moral principle as in his usual dispensations; and being induced by the same motive to accomplish the same end, the laws of God's moral government are not violated, such laws being established by the *motives* and the *ends produced*, and not by the *means employed*. In estimating, therefore, the credibility of a miracle, we look at the moral not the physical effect. And here, moral analogy will be found to confirm the truth of the miracles recorded in Scripture. But our Author leaves out the consideration of God's moral government, and reasons on the facts which are said to have happened, without any reference to an end; we will therefore examine.

how far his conclusions are just upon his own principles.

He defines miracles to be “a violation of the laws of nature;” he undoubtedly means the *physical* laws, as no part of his reasoning has any reference to them in a *moral* point of view. Now these laws must be deduced, either from his own view of events only, or from that, and testimony jointly; and if testimony be allowed on one part, it must also be admitted on the other. But the laws by which the Deity governs the universe, can, at best, only be inferred from the *whole* series of his dispensations from the beginning of the world; testimony must therefore necessarily be admitted, and must constitute the principal means of discovering those laws. Now our Author, in deducing the laws of nature, rejects all well-authenticated miraculous events, granted to be possible, and therefore not incredible and to be rejected without examination, and thence would establish a law to prove against their credibility; but the proof of a position ought to proceed upon principles totally independent of every supposition implying either its truth or falsehood. “’Tis a miracle,” says he, “that a dead man should come to life, because that has never been observed in any age or country;” yet testimony, confirmed by every proof necessary to establish

a matter of fact, asserts that such an event has happened. But our Author argues against its credibility, because it is contrary to the laws of nature; and in establishing those laws, he rejects all such facts^c, though authenticated by all the evidence they can possibly admit of; taking thereby into consideration, events of that kind only which have fallen within the sphere of our present observations, as if the whole series of God's dispensations were necessarily included in the course of a few years. But who shall thus circumscribe the operations of Divine power and wisdom, and say, "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further?" Before he rejected circumstances of this kind in investigating the laws of nature, he should, at least, have shown, that we have *not all* that evidence for them which we might have had, supposing they

^c Mr. H. *assumes* a law of nature (for he brings no evidence to support his position) which excludes all miraculous facts, and then applies that very law to reject such facts! But (besides the absurdity of the reasoning) we must not exclude any matter of fact, as not falling in with the laws of nature, because every matter of fact is possible, and therefore it *may* happen, or it *may have* happened. "Known unto God *only*, are all his works from the beginning." The Author further talks about "the absolute *impossibility* or miraculous nature of the events," that is, the *impossibility* of that which is *possible!* The truth is, every matter of fact must be confirmed or overthrown by *evidence* from *testimony*, in conjunction with *attendant circumstances*; but as Mr. H. has entered into no examination of this evidence for the truth of the Scripture miracles, we must object to his conclusions.

were true; he should also have shown, in a moral point of view, that the events were inconsistent with the ordinary operations of Providence; and that there was no end to justify the means. Whereas, on the contrary, there *is all* the evidence for them which a matter of fact can possibly have; they are perfectly consistent with all the moral dispensations of Providence; and at the same time that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is most unexceptionably attested, we discover a moral intention in the miracle, which very satisfactorily accounts for that exertion of Divine power. We are justified, therefore, in rejecting our Author's conclusion, upon this ground, that it is not deduced by just reasoning from acknowledged principles, but is a necessary consequence of his own arbitrary supposition.

As the Deity, at the creation, must necessarily have had the whole plan of his government in view, events called Miracles, must have been the result of a pre-established arrangement, equally with those which are more common; and to produce a series of pre-ordained events, can be no violation of a law. The world being created for a *moral* purpose, physical events may frequently be subservient to that end^d; the laws of God's moral government must therefore

^d See the Third Remark.

direct all such effects, when they have a moral tendency. Events which do not concern the moral government of God, as the returns of day and night, summer and winter, are uninterrupted; these being subject only to the laws of matter and motion, continue their course for the benefit of man, as regard his existence here; and his wants of this nature remaining always the same, the same events are continued without interruption. But physical events of a moral tendency become subject to a moral law, and are liable to vary according to the laws of God's moral government; we must therefore judge of the credibility of all such facts, by referring them to that end. But our Author makes the *physical* improbability of an event, which altogether respects a *moral* end, the measure of it's incredibility; a principle totally inadmissable. The objection therefore of our Author against miracles, as facts not subject to any of the laws of nature, is unfounded; whilst testimony and analogy tend to establish their credibility, and show their agreement with every principle by which we can judge that the Deity is influenced in his moral government of the world.

In respect to facts considered in a *physical* point of view, we can no more account for the common operations of nature, than for those called miraculous. A tree springing from a seed

buried in the earth, is an event equally unaccountable as that of a man being raised from the dead. Now there is nothing in our condition which requires that the latter should happen so often as the former, and accordingly it is found not to occur so frequently; but taking place only at those times when some extraordinary manifestation of Divine power becomes necessary to correct the moral state of the world, it affords a very satisfactory proof, that it stands in that regular series of events which Providence is carrying on for the benefit of mankind.

The miracles under our present consideration involve in themselves no contradiction, and therefore contain no impossibility; and being possible, there is nothing in the facts which excludes an investigation into their truth or falsehood. In examining, therefore, into the grounds upon which the belief of these miracles rest, we ought to admit the same evidence that would be allowed in any other case. A related matter of fact, shown to be agreeable to God's dispensations, must be confirmed or overthrown by testimony^e, in conjunction with other cir-

^e The testimony of one witness may not be sufficient to prove a fact, but the concurrence of another, although of no greater authority, may put the matter out of all doubt. *CONCURRING Testimony* is the strong ground on which the credibility of the Christian miracles is established; it works conviction amounting to moral certainty,

cumstances attending it. We may reason, in many cases, concerning the probability in favour of an event; and may show, upon true principles, the number of chances for and against it. Reason can do no more^f; it can never prove whether it has or has not happened; but if a number of credible witnesses agree in asserting that it has, and the fact be also connected with circumstances tending strongly to confirm it, we are undoubtedly bound to believe it; both the reasoning and the report of the witnesses may be true; the latter tends directly to establish the truth of the fact, and the former does not contradict it. The extraordinary nature of a fact, upon it's first statement, diminishes it's credibility, and the mind remains in doubt, until all the circumstances respecting the event have been fully examined^g. That a man should this

certainly, and therefore it cannot be unreasonable to act upon it; *prudent* it *must* be, considering the sanctions which Christianity proposes. The faith required is only in proportion to the evidence; and *that Faith will be accepted, which produces Obedience.*

^f See the Second Remark.

^g If it were said, that about two hundred years ago, a Body of a very singular nature appeared in the heavens for a few months, then disappeared, and has been no more seen, we should suspend our belief, till evidence was produced. But when we are further informed, that this extraordinary phenomenon was first observed by KEPLER, and visible to every one; was recorded by him, and never disputed, we do not hesitate to believe it. In this event, we see the Deity employed in a work of creation, destined for a
very

hour be deprived of, and the next restored to life, are events equally within the power of the Deity to accomplish; the former we see every day, and therefore the slightest evidence is sufficient to render it credible; let us then consider, what circumstances are necessary to establish the credibility of the latter; that is, to reduce it to *moral* certainty, so that a man's actions would be directed by it, in the same manner as if it were *absolute*.

To render very extraordinary facts credible, more particularly such as are the subject of our present consideration, it is necessary only to show, that there was a power in the agent to produce them, and an end to be accomplished which required events of so unusual a nature. This principle is every day confirmed by experience. If an extraordinary fact be related, we at first hesitate to believe it; but if an adequate reason for it be assigned, and a sufficient power in the agent to accomplish it, be acknowledged, it then becomes credible. Under these circumstances, the argument against the credibility of a fact from its extraordinary nature, will no longer operate to the exclusion of

very short term of existence, and for a purpose of which we are totally ignorant: Shall we, then, refuse to acknowledge him upon like evidence, when the operations have confessedly a reference to his moral government? The credibility of every fact is increased, by a further view of the ends for which it was intended.

evidence^h. We are therefore to consider, how far this is the case in the present circumstance.

Miracles are said to have been wrought to establish a more pure and comprehensive system of religion than any which at that time prevailed in the world; that is, to afford satisfactory evidence that it was promulgated by a "Teacher sent from God." We must first, therefore, inquire, what necessity there was for the establishment of Christianity.

The system of the universe bears ample testimony of the existence of a Being, infinite in *power*, *wisdom*, and *goodness*. For what must be the *power* of Him, who formed and gave motion to the vast bodies which compose it? And considering the nice laws by which these bodies are regulated, with the admirable harmony and simplicity of the arrangements, by which the vicissitudes of day and night, summer and winter, are preserved, we can no less admire the *wisdom* than the power of the same Being. And when we further reflect, that these effects are subservient to the use of man, and that the earth is filled with stores for his support, and for the support of the inferior parts of the creation, his *goodness* will be equally conspicuous. It would take up too much time to give, in

^h When we assign a reason for a miracle, we assign a reason for it's credibility.

detail, all the arguments by which these things may be proved; but whoever will examine the constitution of the universe, the construction of the animal and vegetable creation, and the wonderful provision made for their subsistence, will see such marks of design, power, wisdom, and goodness, as must force him to acknowledge, "This hath God done." It has indeed been supposed, that the system is imperfect; containing in itself the seeds of it's own dissolution—that the small irregularities (as they were called) which are produced by the mutual actions of the bodies upon each other, will necessarily bring on it's own destruction. But it is the invaluable privilege of man, that he can prove the works of his Creator to be perfect. All these supposed anomalies are now shown to be regulated by fixed lawsⁱ; which, in a certain period of time, bring all things back to the points from which they departed, and thus the system is preserved from falling into ruin.

Admitting, then, the power, wisdom, and goodness, of a superintending Being, which are so conspicuous in the works of the creation, and to which alone we must have recourse for any satisfactory proofs of the attributes of God, it being from them, as St. Paul saith, that "the

ⁱ See "*A Confutation of Atheism, from the Laws and Constitution of the Heavenly Bodies,*" by the Author of these Discourses.

invisible things of God, even his eternal power and godhead are understood," we are next to show the necessity of a revelation at the time when Christianity was promulgated.

The world, at that time, may be considered as composed of Jews and Gentiles; for although the latter might be subdivided into different classes, yet it is not necessary for our present purpose. Respecting the religion of the Gentiles, it may be considered, First, as wanting authority; Secondly, as mistaken in the nature of God; Thirdly, as defective in it's moral doctrines, and consequently erroneous in it's practice.

First; As wanting authority. At the time of HOMER, there was a tradition of the soul's immortality. Afterwards, SOCRATES and PLATO taught the same doctrine, and were the first who attempted to prove it by argument. The former followed traditions which afforded but little satisfaction; but the opinions of the latter respecting God and his dispensations, are so consonant with the writings of MOSES and the Prophets, that he probably acquired them by conversing with the Egyptian priests in his travels into Egypt. TULLY says, that this doctrine was delivered down from all antiquity, but that the ancients gave no reasons by which it could be satisfactorily proved. SENECA, though

he sometimes asserts the soul's immortality, at other times denies it. If, therefore, we acknowledge, that some of the ancient philosophers had obscure notions of a future state from tradition, and others from the light of nature, yet they could not deliver their doctrine with that authority which was necessary for the conviction of mankind; they were neither "Teachers sent from God," nor could they prove their doctrine to be of Divine origin. It could not, therefore, be expected to have any general influence. Accordingly we find, that they complained of the great inefficacy of their moral doctrines upon the minds and conduct of men, who, they asserted, improved more in knowledge than in goodness. The best and wisest of them were not ashamed to confess that mankind wanted a Divine revelation. SOCRATES said, "You may give over all thoughts of amending men's manners, unless God will send some other person to instruct you." And PLATO confessed, that "the present evil state of the world could only be corrected by the particular interposition of God."

Secondly; As containing erroneous opinions respecting the nature of God. The Stoics, by their doctrine of fatality, denied the freedom of the Divine will; and the laws of unalterable fate destroyed the omnipotence of the Deity,

EPICURUS excluded God's providence from the world; nor was it allowed by ARISTOTLE, on this side the celestial spheres; and PLUTARCH contended for two Gods, one infinitely good, the other infinitely wicked.

Thirdly: As defective in it's moral doctrines, and practice. ZENO, founder of the Stoics, maintained the guilt of all sins to be equal. ARISTIPPUS refused to support his own children; he made the pleasure of the body to be the chief good; and taught, that a man might commit theft, adultery, or sacrilege, when he saw a convenient opportunity, but not otherwise, as they were not sinful unless discovered. ARISTOTLE and TULLY were advocates for hatred and revenge; and it was a precept of one of those who were honoured with the title of, *The Seven Wise Men of Greece*, "Be kind to your friends, but revenge yourselves on your enemies." These instances sufficiently show the inability of natural religion to teach men their duty. Many excellent rules of action may undoubtedly be collected from the writings of the Heathen philosophers; but they are mixed with the grossest absurdities, and have no foundation on those principles which are the best and only security for a virtuous life—the fear of God, and the expectation of future rewards and punishments.

The religion of the Jews, indeed, was of Divine origin; and although they had much juster ideas of God, and his superintending providence, yet, as the doctrine of "life and immortality," had not been clearly revealed to them, their notions respecting his promises were extremely defective, inasmuch as they considered them directed to this life only; for one part of the Jews absolutely denied the resurrection of the body; and the other part seemed to have had very obscure notions of it. All the ideas they had of a Messiah, were, that he would come and set up a temporal kingdom; they appear to have had no expectations of any benefits from him, but those which respected this life. Of the great mercy of God to man, in giving him an opportunity of securing a future life of endless happiness, they seemed to have been almost as ignorant as the Heathens themselves. And from the severity with which our Saviour reproached the Jews, we may conclude, that the moral doctrines they held were extremely defective. They fell from a true religion into superstition, trusting all to a multitude of ceremonies and traditions, of merely human authority; and at the time when they scrupled not to commit the grossest immoralities, they would sooner have died than have eaten any unclean meats, or dispensed with their most trivial ceremonies.

Considering, therefore, the depraved state of religion at the time when our Saviour appeared, the providence of God, and his benevolence to man, inferred from the works of the creation, it is very credible that he would, under such circumstances, vouchsafe to direct mankind to a more perfect knowledge of his will. Accordingly it is related, that God did send a Person to reform the world, and to promulgate his laws. We are therefore next to examine, on what grounds we are induced to believe this relation.

S E R M O N II.



2 PET. I. 16.

We have not followed cunningly devised fables.

WE have in our hands a collection of writings called the New Testament, said to contain the will of God communicated to man, by a Person called JESUS CHRIST, above 1700 years ago. That at the different parts were written soon after the time of the events they record, was never doubted, since they are expressly acknowledged by a succession of writers up to that time. Profane historians also mention a Person of that name, the founder of a new religion, who at that period lived in Judea. The authors of these writings are said to have been disciples of JESUS CHRIST, who were most of them with him during his ministry, and related what they saw and heard; and since these circumstances are acknowledged by the enemies as well as the friends of Christianity, it is

unnecessary to insist any further upon establishing this point. We have, therefore, only to examine the evidence for the truth of the facts contained in these writings.

The miracles related to have been performed by JESUS CHRIST, are said to have been done publicly in Jerusalem, and in the principal cities of Judea. The names of the persons on whom he exercised his miraculous powers are mentioned, the places where they lived, with many other particulars. The publication of a narrative, containing such extraordinary facts, so circumstantially related;—of such importance to mankind to be established, if true, and no less important to be contradicted, if false,—would necessarily excite a very strict inquiry respecting them. The effects produced by that inquiry we must therefore next consider, in order to obtain the evidence upon which the truth of Christianity is founded, and how far it tended to the conviction of mankind.

The Acts of the Apostles give an account of the rise and progress of Christianity—that it spread itself quickly into the principal cities of Asia, Greece, and Italy, and soon overspread the whole Roman empire. And the Epistles to the different churches established in the time of the Apostles, show how much it was, in those early times, dispersed and received as the undoubted

word of God. But that the truth of this may not rest on the authority of that book whose authenticity we want to prove, we can produce sufficient proof from profane authors, many of whom were no friends to Christianity. **SUETONIUS** represents the Christians to have been very numerous at Rome, about seven years after our Lord's death. **ARIAN**, about twenty-five years after, speaks of baptized and elect persons whom he calls Jews, but who, from these circumstances, were undoubtedly Christians; and tells us, that they were so steady in their principles, that he whose practice did not agree with his professions, was called a dissembler. **TACITUS**, who wrote about thirty years after **CHRIST**, informs us, that **CHRIST** was the founder of the Christian religion—that he lived in Judea in the reign of **TIBERIUS**—had many disciples, and was put to death by **PONTIUS PILATE**. **PLINY**'s letter to **TRAJAN**, about sixty years after **CHRIST**'s ascension, proves how widely Christianity had then been extended; and shows, that the extreme severity with which the Christians were treated, did not hinder the spreading of their religion. **QUADRATUS**, a famous philosopher at Athens, about ninety years after our Saviour, speaking of the miracles wrought by him, says, "But his works were always seen because they were true; they

were seen in those who were raised from the dead. Nay, those persons who were thus healed and raised, were seen, not only at the time of their being healed and raised, but long afterwards, even in the time of *our* days." His apology put a stop to the persecution then going on against the Christians. About the same time, ARISTIDES, an Athenian philosopher, and famed for his acquirements in learning, wrote an apology for the Christians to the Emperor ADRIAN. This writing was extant in the year 870. About the year 140, ANTONINUS PIUS sent his rescript in favour of the Christians, to Larissa, Thessalonica, Athens, and in general throughout all Greece; from which it is manifest, that these places were at that time filled with Christians. Not however to enter into a longer detail, it is evident from the persecutions of the Christians under the different Emperors, till the time of CONSTANTINE, that Christianity, from it's first promulgation, spread very rapidly into all parts of the earth then known. and was embraced by men of the first eminence for virtue and learning.

The rapid conversion of the world to Christianity being established, we are next to consider the motives which could induce mankind thus readily to embrace this religion. These must have been, either the injunctions of the civil

power under which they lived—The love of novelty—The hopes of gain,—or, A conviction of the truth of that religion.

In respect to the first, it is allowed that the civil power was never exerted to promote the spreading of Christianity ; on the contrary, was every-where employed to oppose it. It is unnecessary to urge any particular proof of this ; both sacred and profane historians agree in confirming it.

In regard to the second motive, it must be acknowledged that *some* men may always be found ready to act upon such principles ; but experience shows, that the *generality* of mankind are very tenacious of those doctrines and prejudices which they imbibed in their infancy, and strongly disposed to defend any opinions they have long maintained. Under such powerful influence, the principle here assumed can never be considered as adequate to induce the bulk of mankind to renounce at once the religious tenets they have embraced from their childhood. It argues a more than ordinary evidence and power in that religion, which can overturn every principle of education, and every superstition and prejudice that can enslave the mind.

In the third place, the followers of JESUS CHRIST could have no reasonable hopes of gain ;

for where the established religion of a country is supported by the civil power, and where the prejudices of education will always co-operate in it's support, there can be no well-founded hope of advantage from opposing it. The first promulgators of Christianity were men of too much good sense not to foresee this; and the experience of every day must have convinced them of the absurdity of such a supposition. Their persecutions must have shown them, that their temporal interests could not be promoted by it; and it cannot be supposed, that the converts were influenced by worldly prospects, when their teachers were obliged to submit to imprisonments and death. When men take up a religion under it's persecution, it must be embraced from conviction. Most of the Apostles, and many of the first defenders of Christianity, suffered the loss of every thing temporal; and rather than renounce their Master, many of them patiently submitted to cruelties, which human nature, unassisted by Divine assurance of future rewards, could not have supported; and at last, offered up their lives in defence of their principles. What then could be the prospects on this side the grave, to induce their followers to persevere? Indeed their enemies never accused them of acting upon temporal expectations. It is allowed, that no worldly

views were ever offered by the first preachers of the Christian religion, to induce men to become their disciples; on the contrary, the duties they required them to fulfil, militated strongly against their present interests and their passions. The rewards of a future life were all they had to offer^a.

The rapid establishment of Christianity must therefore have been from a conviction which those who embraced it, had of it's "truth and power unto salvation." Christianity at first spread itself amongst the most enlightened nations of the earth—in those places where human learning was in it's greatest perfection; and simply by the force of it's evidence, amongst such men it gained an establishment. It has been justly observed, that "it happened very providentially to the honour of the Christian religion, that it did not take it's rise in the dark illiterate ages of the world, but at a time when arts and sciences were at their height, and when

^a Christianity leads men to prefer future enjoyments to present gratifications; to give up "the sinful lusts of the flesh" for rewards at the day of judgment. Present pleasures are never relinquished, but upon a *firm conviction* of greater in reversion; a conviction which the first converts to Christianity must strongly have felt, before they could have made such sacrifices. When "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," was the maxim, there must have been something very extraordinary to produce a conversion.

there were men who made it the business of their lives to search after truth, and sift the several opinions of philosophers and wise men, concerning the duty, the end, and chief happiness of reasonable creatures." The learned and the ignorant alike embraced it's doctrines; the learned were not likely to be deceived in the proofs that were offered; and the same cause undoubtedly operated to produce the effect upon both. But an immediate conversion of the bulk of mankind, can arise only from some proofs of a Divine authority offering themselves immediately to the senses. The preaching of any new doctrine, if left to operate only by it's own force, would go but a very little way towards the immediate conversion of the ignorant, who have no principle of action but what arises from habit, and whose powers of reasoning are insufficient to correct their errors. When MAHOMET was required by his followers to work a miracle for their conviction, he always declined it; too cautious to attempt a forgery of that kind, he amused his followers with pretended visions, which, with the subsequent aid of the civil and military power, were sufficient to enforce, at least, an outward compliance. But the Apostles established their religion in opposition to that power; and as the accomplishment of that event was by a few obscure

persons, who founded their pretensions upon authority from heaven, we are next to consider, what proofs of their Divine commission they offered to the world; and whether they themselves could have been deceived, or mankind have been deluded by them.

The miracles, said to have been wrought for the establishment of Christianity, were, giving speech to the dumb, making the lame to walk, restoring sight to the blind, and raising the dead. These are related as public and notorious acts; and being matters of fact, the witnesses could not have been deceived in them. If our Saviour and his Apostles did not perform these miracles, their endeavour to persuade mankind to believe them, or to credit a circumstantial relation of facts that were not true, must have shown a degree of folly and weakness totally inconsistent with their acknowledged good understandings. The belief of very extraordinary facts is slow, nor can they be established till after mature examination. The report that a dead man had been restored to life, must necessarily have provoked an examination, that would have discovered the deceit, if the thing had been false; and must have proved him who was the instrument of the operation, to be "a Teacher sent from God," if found to be true. The names of the persons on whom the miracles

are said to have been wrought, and all the circumstances attending the transactions, are so minutely described, that it was very easy to ascertain the truth, even at a considerable time after the events had taken place. The discourses of the Founder and first teachers of our religion, show them to have been persons of very extraordinary sense and prudence; men who had too much wisdom to have attempted a very gross imposition upon mankind; nor would they who related the events, have been so circumstantial in their accounts, had they known them to have been false. The miracles were many of them done in the most public places—at Jerusalem, and at Capernaum, the next principal place in Judea. The ministry of our Saviour continued for three or four years, during which time, he embraced every proper opportunity of exerting his miraculous powers; they were not shown once only, and “in a corner,” but were *frequently* and *openly* displayed; and from the commencement of the ministry of the Apostles to the death of St. John, there was a period of about 60 years, in which miracles are acknowledged to have been performed; and in most of the instances wherein this Divine power was exerted, every thing respecting them was so particularly stated, that mankind had every means of convincing themselves of the truth

of the relation. Under these circumstances Christianity was established. A conversion therefore to the Christian religion, must have arisen from a full conviction of it's truth. Christianity did not give rise to the report of miracles, but was founded upon them. There is some doubt respecting the time when St. John wrote his Gospel; but the other Gospels, and most, if not all the Epistles, were published before the destruction of Jerusalem, for the Jewish state is spoken of as then subsisting; besides which, there are many other circumstances tending to confirm this opinion. PORPHORY, a learned and severe adversary of Christianity, who possessed every means of discovering whether these writings were spurious, has expressed no doubts of their being genuine. That the Evangelists and Apostles should publish a circumstantial relation of facts, so near the time when they are said to have happened, if they were not true, is altogether incredible, and totally contrary to every principle on which an impostor would act; and to admit them to be false, is to take away the cause and leave the effect. To attempt a forgery under such circumstances, would have been too gross to have imposed upon mankind, and must have furnished the enemies of Christianity with powers sufficient for it's destruction. The

Apostles attested miracles, performed in the very place where they gave their evidence; Peter and John preached the resurrection of Christ, at Jerusalem, not many months after the event. This would not have been the conduct of impostors. We might also urge the acknowledged simplicity and purity of the lives of the first preachers of Christianity, their benevolence to man, and unaffected piety to God, as strongly co-operating to free them from any suspicion of being deceivers. The testimony of men of strictly religious and moral character, of unblameable lives and tried integrity of conduct, to what they themselves have seen, and in which they could not be deceived, must be considered as furnishing proof amounting to moral certainty. Under these circumstances, the extraordinary nature of the fact, so far from being an argument *against* its credibility, is an argument *for* it; it being much less probable that such men should deceive in a matter where the salvation of mankind is concerned, than that they should fall into less errors. Now the Apostles are acknowledged to have been men of this description—that they spent their lives in piety to God—in charity to man—in teaching the most perfect morality, and the purest religion—in showing their sincerity by their practice, and dying in defence of their principles.

Of such men, we may believe the common failings incident to human nature ; but we cannot believe that they would solemnly appeal to God for the truth of what they knew to be false. There was nothing in their character which could beget mistrust. Deliberate falsehood and hypocrisy cannot here be imputed. Many of the first adversaries of our religion, and those the most formidable, never disputed the truth of miracles ; on the contrary, they mention them as having been performed. The Jews themselves acknowledged their reality. JULIAN and CELSUS, two avowed enemies of Christianity, amongst all the arts which they used to destroy it's credibility, not daring to deny that our Saviour and his Apostles wrought miracles, ascribed them to magic. Facts confessed by those who had the greatest interest in denying them, ought to be admitted. But Christianity is now so far lost in philosophy, that our modern infidels deny, what the first unbelievers, with all *their* means of information, found themselves obliged to admit. The Christian religion must therefore have been first received from a full conviction of the truth of the miracles said to have been wrought for it's support ; it did not owe it's establishment to the persuasions of philosophers and orators, nor to the influence of the civil or military power, but *altogether* to

the force of it's own evidence. When men are left to judge for themselves in a matter where their eternal happiness is immediately concerned, and have no motive to embrace new doctrines but the force of their evidence, we may conclude they will act from conviction.

The evidence here offered in defence of our religion loses none of it's force from length of time, since we reason upon a matter of fact, never disputed. Christianity was preached, and immediately upon it's first promulgation received by a great number of all ranks of mankind, in all nations. The conclusions, therefore, deduced from this circumstance, are as good now as they were 1700 years ago. If then we are, as our Author asserts, to take experience for our guide, it tends directly to confirm our position, since our uniform experience of the motives on which men are accustomed to act, proves that the Christian religion could not have been established in the manner it was, had the whole been an imposition^b. The general grounds of human

^b The Jews themselves acknowledged, that the establishment of Christianity would prove it's Divine authority: "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. And to him they agreed." We have seen the establishment; and conclude, as they would have done under the same circumstances, that it was the work of God. Here we have the direct testimony of the Jews who lived at the first preaching of Christianity, in favour of it's truth.

action, establishes the moral certainty of our religion. Our Author, therefore, reasons upon a false principle, when he asserts that we want experience to convince us of the truth of miracles. We do not want experience to convince us, that Christianity must have been first embraced from conviction, and that conviction is immediately connected with the truth of miracles, without which, no sufficient motives for belief can be assigned. The very extraordinary manner in which the world was converted to Christianity, stands an everlasting monument of it's truth; and seems intended by Providence as an argument to future generations, of it's Divine authority. A very eminent writer has observed, that "the conversion of the Gentile world, whether we consider the difficulties attending it, the opposition made to it, the wonderful work wrought to accomplish it, or the happy effects and consequences of it, may be considered as a more illustrious evidence of God's power, than even our Saviour's miracles of casting out devils, healing the sick, and raising the dead." Indeed, a miracle said to have been wrought without any circumstances sufficient to justify such an exertion of Divine power, could not easily be rendered credible; and our Author's argument proves no more. If it were related, that about 1700 years ago, a man was raised from the

dead, for no purpose but that of restoring him to life, we confess that no evidence could induce us to believe it; but if the moral government of God appeared in that event, and there were circumstances attending it which could not be accounted for by human means, the fact then becomes credible. When two extraordinary events are thus connected, the proof of one establishes the truth of the other. Our Author has reasoned upon the fact as standing alone, but it should be considered in a moral view—as connected with the establishment of a more pure religion, and it then becomes credible. In the proof of any circumstance, we must attend to every principle which co-operates to establish it; whereas our Author, by considering the case of a man said to have been raised from the dead, simply in a *physical* point of view, without any reference to a *moral* end, endeavours to show that it cannot be rendered credible; and, upon that ground, we may admit his conclusions, without affecting the credibility of Christianity. The position on which he endeavours to establish his argument, does not include all the circumstances upon which the evidence of Christianity rests. He says, “No testimony can be sufficient to establish a miracle, unless it be of such a kind, that the falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endea-

vours to prove.” Now this reasoning, at furthest, can be admitted in those cases only, where the fact has nothing but testimony to establish it. But the proofs of Christianity do not rest simply upon the testimony of it's first preachers, and of those who were afterwards the instruments of communicating it; but, in a great measure, upon the acknowledged and very extraordinary effects produced by the preaching of a few unlearned, obscure persons^c, who taught “Christ crucified;” upon the ceremonies, feasts, sacraments, and other public monuments, instituted at the first establishment of Christianity, and continued down to the present time, in conjunction with an uninterrupted chain of testimonies.

When the proof of any position depends upon arguments drawn from various sources, all concurring to establish it's truth, to select some one circumstance, and attempt to show that that alone is not sufficient to render the fact credible, and thence infer that it is not true, is a conclusion not to be admitted. But it is thus that our Author has endeavoured to destroy the credibility of Christianity, the evidences of which depend on a great variety of indisputable

^c When “the weak things of the world confound the things which are mighty,” there must be a secret over-ruling Power; for every effect must have an adequate cause.

circumstances and facts, all co-operating to confirm it's truth; but an examination of these falls not within the plan here proposed. He rests all his argument upon the extraordinary nature of the facts, considered by themselves; for a common fact, with the same evidence, would immediately be admitted. We have endeavoured to show, that the extraordinary nature of the facts is no ground for disbelieving them, on two accounts: First, that the circumstances to be accomplished required a transaction of that extraordinary nature, as much as the most common events are necessary to fulfil the usual dispensations of Providence, and therefore the Deity was then directed by precisely the same motive as in a more ordinary case, that of affording us such assistance as our moral condition renders necessary. In the establishment of a pure religion, the proof of it's Divine origin may require such extraordinary circumstances as may never afterwards be requisite, and accordingly we find that such events have not since taken place. Here is therefore a perfect consistency in the operations of the Deity, in his moral government, and not a violation of the laws of nature: Secondly, the facts are confirmed by unexceptionable testimony, and immediately connected with other events, indisputably true, and which, without the sup-

position of the truth of those facts, would have been, at least, equally above the reach of human means. Thus, we conceive the reasoning of our Author to be totally inconclusive; and the arguments employed to prove the fallacy of his conclusions, appear, at the same time, fully to justify our belief in, and prove the moral certainty of our holy religion.

REMARKS *on* MR. HUME'S *Principles and Reasoning, in his "Essay on Miracles."*

THE adversaries of the Scripture miracles contend against their credibility, from the very extraordinary nature of the facts, endeavouring, upon that ground, to set aside the evidence produced in their support. Now the evidence and the fact are two independent circumstances. A defect in the evidence must be determined from the evidence itself, for there is nothing in the fact, considered abstractedly, by which you can discover it. When the steps of a demonstration are perceived to be just, the conclusion is admitted: but we never conclude the steps to be erroneous, because the proposition appears to be of an extraordinary nature. That one line may continually approach another, and yet never meet it, might at first sight appear impossible. We, nevertheless, proceed to examine the demonstration, and finding the reasoning to be legitimate, conclude the proposition to be true. In like manner we ought to proceed in our present inquiry. The extraordinary nature of a fact is no ground for inverting the order of reasoning: it only requires a more cautious examination of

the evidence produced in it's favour. We must not prejudge and condemn the evidence, from any difficulty respecting the fact itself simply considered. Physical difficulties cannot invalidate proofs amounting to moral certainty^a. The evidence for a matter of fact, is like the steps of a demonstration; in both cases they are used as means to investigate a truth; in the former case we arrive at *moral*, in the latter, at *absolute* certainty. Assuming the incredibility of the fact, is at once to reject the fact without consulting the evidence in it's favour. But it is thus that infidels argue against the credibility of miracles. The first stumbling-block arises altogether from a consideration of the fact; hence, the mind is wrought up to that degree of unbelief, that the evidence has no chance of a fair hearing. This seems to be a true statement of the difficulty under which Infidelity labours. If good seed be not sown on good ground, it will bring no fruit to perfection.

^a A metaphysical argument can never set aside the force of clear testimony. A judge condemns a man to death on the latter, but he would never do it on the former ground. Nor can a physical difficulty be opposed to well authenticated matters of fact. Mere difficulties prove nothing, because they may exist in indisputable facts. That the motion of the arm should follow the determination of the will, is inexplicable, but yet the fact is true. Difficulties are proofs of our ignorance, not arguments against the fact. The truth or falsehood of a fact must be determined, not from what we do *not* know, but from what we *do* know.

The extraordinary nature of a fact is no argument against its admission upon authentic evidence, it only implies that such a fact was *not to be expected*. Improbability relates only to *expectation*; it offers nothing which can affect the *proof* of the fact. An inquiry into the truth of a matter of fact, is a question of testimony not of probability. The chances for and against the happening of an event, make no part of an investigation into its truth. Mr. HUME appears to place the improbability of a miraculous event, to a wrong account; he puts it in opposition to the evidence in support of the fact; whereas, its proper office is only *to influence our expectations*, and thence to cause a suspension of our belief, until evidence is produced; but the evidence not being affected by the improbability, the mind ought to be left unbiassed in respect to the proofs which may be offered. If it suffer itself to be seduced from this, it draws its conclusions from false grounds.

Mr. HUME's definition of a miracle is an assumption of a truth; it is a position asserting a thing to be, and therefore no definition. Now our objection to his assumption is this, that a fact may be under the direction, either of a physical or moral law; and a miraculous fact having regard to a moral end, becomes subject to, and

is directed by, the law of God's moral government; whereas our Author considers it only in a physical point of view. Since "known unto God are all his works from the beginning," when a miracle is wrought, there is, in the sight of God, no alteration in the physical arrangement of things; no previous designs are altered; such events, however, constitute a proof of an *extraordinary* act of the Deity, they not being necessary for any physical purposes. But as they are instituted for a moral end, they are under the regulation of a moral law, and fall in with the law of God's moral government. We may, therefore, consider a miracle as *an extraordinary physical act of the Deity, for the express purpose of a moral end*. We are aware it may be said, that other acts may be supposed, not included in this description, which would be called miraculous; to this we answer, that we know of no such acts^b. All the acts of the Deity have reference to his general plan of government; "the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised," not for the purpose of giving relief to individuals, but "for the glory of God, that

^b It may be here said, that the Pagan and Romish miracles are of this kind—miracles not performed for a moral end. But as our Author himself rejects all these, we, in our contest with him, may be allowed to do the same. Hence, the Scripture miracles only fall under our consideration.

“the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” The physical world requires no correction; it does not decay by length of time; no extraordinary physical acts are necessary for any purposes which regard the material system; but the moral world sometimes stands in need of reformation, and the hand of God is then visibly extended to bring men back to a knowledge and sense of their duty. These considerations greatly diminish the incredibility of miraculous facts, and leave them to be established by the same kind of evidence that would be necessary to establish the belief of any other matter of fact. We are entitled to estimate the credibility of a fact, from its agreement with the dispensations of God in his *moral*, equally as in his *physical* government of the world. No physical ends are frustrated by a miracle; moral ones are accomplished. The strength of our Author’s argument against the credibility of miracles, rests principally upon his own definition.

In an inquiry into the credibility of miracles, both the Being of a God and his Providence, must be admitted. Without this concession, the matter is already determined. A denial of these circumstances, at once puts an end to the dispute. It would be nugatory to offer evidence in proof that a man has been raised from

the dead, whilst you deny the existence of a power capable of producing such an effect, or refuse to admit a providence. Since, therefore, Mr. HUME has, by laboured arguments, endeavoured to destroy the evidence in favour of the credibility of the Scripture miracles, he must necessarily have acknowledged a God, and his superintendence over his works. To make him consistent with himself, he is reduced to the necessity of admitting our assumption. In fact, he, in express terms, grants it; for he says, “A miracle is a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent^c.” Without, therefore, entering into an examination of the question respecting the existence of a God, and his interfering in human affairs, we are entitled, in our dispute with Mr. H., to assume the truth of both; and in the preceding discourses, we kept this in view, as a principle upon which we were allowed to reason. Granting this, there can be no great difficulty in

^c The references are here made to the Octavo edition of Mr. HUME's *Essays and Treatises*, published in 1777, by CADELL in the Strand. This is the Author's last edition; and having corrected his former editions, he desires it may be considered as containing, after due consideration, his philosophical sentiments and principles. When reference is not made, it is to be understood that the quotations are from his *Essay on Miracles*, and they are taken in the order in which they there stand, one instance excepted.

admitting *final causes*^d, upon which we have, in a great measure, rested our argument. It also takes away the presumption against the existence of miracles.

The truth or falsehood of a matter of fact, is incapable of demonstration. The evidence, therefore, must rest, not on a species of mathematical proof, but upon other grounds—human testimony, experience, established events connected with it, and what may be inferred from observations on the providence of God; these are the principles, then, upon which we must reason in the subject under our present consideration.

By experience, Mr. HUME cannot mean personal experience only, for he includes past experience in his arguments. This sort of experience must necessarily be derived from the reports of others, and it is this which must constitute the great bulk of direct evidence in the matter under consideration. Hence, this latter experience must be measured by testimony; we may, then, in the present question, use the term experience for testimony. We have, therefore, (contrary to what Mr. H. has asserted) general experience (testimony) in favour of the Christian miracles, since from the establishment of Christianity, they have been acknowledged

^d In defence of final causes, see STILLINGFLEET'S *Origines Sacre*. B. iii. c. 1. PALEY'S *Natural Theology*; and *A Confutation of Atheism*, by the AUTHOR of these Discourses.

both by the friends and enemies of our religion, a few *modern* infidels excepted^e.

After stating the general principles on which we are to estimate the credibility of matters of fact, the Author proceeds to show, under various instances, how we may be deceived in making our determination, and upon what doubtful principles it will sometimes rest. Now all these cases are intended to discredit the grounds upon which the credibility of miracles is established; otherwise, the greater part of the Essay has no reference to the subject it pretends to examine. Indeed, he draws his conclusion from the sum total of what he has advanced. "Upon the *whole*, then, it appears, that no testimony for any kind of miracle, has ever amounted to a probability^f, much less a proof." We must therefore consider, whether, and how far, his positions and adduced circumstances are applicable to the question respecting our belief of miracles, and conclusive against it.

^e The belief of miracles rests upon that strength of evidence, which was never known to deceive; on what reasonable ground, then, can we refuse our assent? In *this* point of view, we have *uniform* experience in favour of their credibility.

^f The whole bulk of evidence in favour of Christianity amounts *not even to a probability!* A very melancholy instance of mental infirmity. To use Mr. H's own words, his "*Reason* here seems to be thrown into a kind of *amazement*, and *suspense*." *Acad. or Scept. Phil.*

Mr. HUME informs us, that Dr. TILLOTSON has furnished him with a decisive argument against the credibility of all miracles. “Were (says the Dr.) the doctrine of the real presence ever so clearly revealed in Scripture, it were directly contrary to the rules of just reasoning to give our assent to it. It contradicts sense.” The hypothesis states, that under the circumstances related in it, the fact would not be credible. True. But there is no such thing stated in Scripture. The hypothesis, therefore, applies to nothing; nothing can be inferred from it. Mr. H. however, “flatters himself that he has discovered an argument of a *like* nature, which, *if* just, will with the wise and learned be an everlasting check to all kinds of *superstition*,” that is, *religion*. Now Dr. T. admits nothing which contradicts the *evidence of sense*; Mr. H. attempts to invalidate *human testimony*. This is his *like* argument.

“Had not men commonly an inclination to truth, and a principle of probity; were they not sensible to shame, when detected of falsehood; were not these, I say, discovered by experience, to be qualities, inherent in human nature, we should never repose the least confidence in human testimony.” And have not they who first related the Christian miracles, a claim to those qualities which constitute con-

fidence in human testimony? As Mr. H. has not shown that they have not, his observation proves nothing against the admission of their testimony. The Christian miracles have the same historical evidence in their support, which any other matter of fact can have; and they have also this further evidence, which no other matter of fact has, that they produced one of the most extraordinary revolutions in the moral world, which the world ever saw.

“ *I should not believe such a story, were it told me by Cato,* was a proverbial saying in Rome, even during the life-time of that philosophical Patriot. The incredibility of a fact, it was allowed, might invalidate so great an authority.” If the evidence for the truth of the miracles recorded in Scripture, rested altogether upon the testimony of a single person, they would not be credible ³. The proverb can be applied no further; it has, therefore, not the least tendency to discredit the miracles wrought for the establishment of the Jewish and Christian religions. In fact, the saying means only this: The incredibility of the fact might render it doubtful, upon the *first* statement, notwithstanding the authority upon which it rested; but not to the exclusion of further evidence.

³ See the Note, page 11

A Roman proverb is brought forward, to set aside the evidence for the credibility of the Scripture miracles!

“The Indian prince who refused to believe the first relations concerning the effects of frost, reasoned justly.” If he reasoned justly, his premises must have been bad, as his conclusion was false. Now the prince rejected the testimony of those who were eye-witnesses of the fact they related, and trusting to his own experience only, concluded against matter of fact. The case is the same with Mr. HUME; he also refuses to admit the testimony of eye-witnesses, further confirmed by all the evidence which can be brought to substantiate a matter of fact, merely upon the *assumed* principle, that in religious matters, there is nothing but “knavery and folly” amongst mankind; and thence concludes against the credibility of miracles. If Mr. H. intended to apply this story to the point in question, it makes directly against himself; if not, why did he introduce it? We forbear to make any observations on his distinction between *not contrary* and *not conformable* to experience, as it has no reference to the question under our present consideration.

“A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable expe-

“ rience has established these laws, the proof
 “ against a miracle, from the very nature of the
 “ fact, is as entire as any argument from expe-
 “ rience can possibly be imagined.” A firm
 and unalterable experience, can mean only, that
 the laws of nature have never been violated; that
 is, there never was a miracle, putting the thing
 defined for the definition. Thus, in fact, Mr.
 HUME assumes as a principle, the conclusion he
 wants to establish; and then, by making a show
 of reasoning, deduces his assumption. But the
 defence of Christianity rests upon no hypothesis;
 we have direct evidence in favour of miracles,
 both from testimony, and incontrovertible facts
 connected with them, and thence contend for
 their credibility. This we conceive to be fair
 reasoning, and not to be shaken by any argu-
 ments founded upon merely hypothetical prin-
 ciples^h. The belief of miracles rests upon *moral*
 certainty, and therefore becomes a matter of
personal persuasion, arising from a consideration
 of the various arguments in defence of Chris-
 tianity; and here, every man must make up
 his mind, from a view of the *whole* evidence.
 St. Paul sometimes appeals to a like mode of

^h ARCHIMEDES said, “ Give me where to stand, and I will move
 the earth.” In like manner, Infidelity says, “ Give me a footing,
 (allow my hypothesis), and I will overturn Christianity.” The
 Philosopher and the Infidel are here under equal difficulties.

determination; “let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”

“There must be uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation.” But suppose the Deity to work a miracle (granted by our Author to be possible), then there would be a miracle, and *not* uniform experience against it; thus, according to Mr. HUME, a miracle ceases to be a miracle as soon as it is performed. A miracle in definition, is not a miracle in fact. The Author generally takes care to frame his definitions so that they may lead him to the conclusions he wants to establish; but here, his definition is inconsistent with the existence of the thing defined. Mr. H. proceeds thus: “As an uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof, from the *nature of the fact*, against the existence of the miracle.” But every matter of fact is possible; there cannot, therefore, be any thing in the *nature* of a fact, against its existence. According to Mr. H. here is a fact which carries in itself, an argument against its own existence! This puts us in mind of a question in MARTINUS SCRIBLERUS, “Whether a possible angel be better than an actually existing fly?”

“No testimony is sufficient to establish

“ a miracle, unless the testimony be of such
 “ a kind, that it’s falsehood would be more
 “ miraculous than the fact which it endeavours
 “ to establish.” But is it not absurd to talk of
 the falsehood of testimony being miraculous?
 Can the falsehood of testimony be a violation of
 the law of nature? According to the Author’s
 own definition, the words have no meaning.
 He perplexes us with the use of termsⁱ, to
 secure himself against an attack. If by mira-
 culous, he means only improbable, we admit his
 position, without any fear that it will affect the
 credibility of miracles. As, however, Mr. H.
 has not here made any application of his posi-
 tion, and determined the case against us, we
 are not called upon to make any further obser-
 vations.

“ There is not to be found, in all history, any
 “ miracle attested by a sufficient number of men,
 “ of such unquestioned good sense, education,
 “ and learning, as to secure us against all delusion

ⁱ Mr. HUME, in his *Origin of Ideas*, complains that Mr. LOCKE has not accurately defined his terms, so as to prevent mistakes; thus drawing out his disputes to a tedious length. And in his *Idea of necessary Connection*, he says, he shall fix precisely the meaning of his terms, and thereby remove the obscurity which would otherwise arise. And yet in the present instance, he uses the term *miracle* to signify, a violation of the law of nature, a very great improbability, an impossibility, or an absurdity, as may best suit his purpose.

“ in themselves ; of such undoubted integrity, as
 “ to place them beyond all suspicion of any
 “ design to deceive others ; of such credit and
 “ reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to have
 “ a great deal to lose in case of their being
 “ detected in any falsehood ; and at the same
 “ time, attesting facts, performed in such a
 “ public manner, and in so celebrated a part of
 “ the world, as to render the detection unavoi-
 “ dable. All which circumstances are requisite
 “ to give us full assurance in the testimony of
 “ men.” A mere assertion this, leading, as
 usual, directly to the conclusion which the Au-
 thor wants to establish. We, however, on the
 contrary, contend, that “ there *is* to be found in
 “ history, miracles attested, &c. &c.” In fact,
 the determination of the question, whether the
 Scripture miracles be credible, rests altogether
 upon a full examination of the articles contained
 in our Author’s position ; these, however, he
 has not examined, but *assumes* their truth with
 as much confidence, as if they were equally self-
 evident as any axiom in EUCLID. The great
 objection to Mr. HUME’s reasoning throughout
 the whole of his Essay on Miracles, is this, that
 he does not examine the evidence for the parti-
 cular facts brought forward, the only ground
 upon which we can form a judgment of their
 credibility, for every fact must stand upon it’s

own evidence. He talks in a very loose and general way, about "entire proof from testimony," and "full proof from experience;" and without any inquiry into the circumstances of the case before him, always concludes against the credibility of miracles with as much confidence, as if he could have, and actually had made, an arithmetical calculation of the probabilities on each side.

"When any thing is affirmed utterly *absurd* and *miraculous*, the mind rather the more readily admits of such a fact, upon account of that very circumstance which ought to destroy all it's authority. The passion of *surprize* and *wonder*, arising from miracles, being an agreeable emotion, gives a sensible tendency towards the belief of those events, from which it is derived." *Surprize* and *wonder* do not (as Mr. H. asserts) here act as *causes*, but exist as *effects*. Do surprize and wonder arise from the relation of a story utterly absurd? But confirm a very extraordinary fact by proper evidence, and then the emotions of surprize and wonder will arise. We *wonder* how such an event could have happened; we are *surprized* at such a matter of fact. These emotions arise after the credibility of the fact is established, from the inability of the mind to find an adequate cause of it.

“ *If* the spirit of religion join itself to the “ love of wonder, there is an end of common “ sense ; and human testimony, in these circum- “ stances, loses all pretensions to authority^k.” But if it be *not* joined, testimony becomes credible. Every *if* may be opposed by an *if not*, which destroys all application of Mr. H’s position. Instead of reasoning upon hypotheses, he should have reasoned upon established facts and principles.

“ A religionist *may* be an enthusiast, and “ imagine he sees what has no reality.” But a religionist may *not* be an enthusiast, and may judge properly of what he sees. The question is not, what *may be*, but what *actually was* the case, in the establishment of Christianity ; this, however, makes no part of Mr. HUME’s inquiry. He goes on with several other *may be*’s, which may always be opposed by so many *may not be*’s. If any one had said to Mr. H. you *may be* an Atheist, and then concluded he was one, he would have very justly contended, that the conclusion did not follow from the premises ; yet he does exactly the same thing in attacking Christianity ; it *may be* all a cheat, therefore it *is* all a cheat. This is precisely the case, nor can it be explained away.

^k Dr. HAY properly observes, that Mr. HUME represents popular prejudice as philosophical reasoning. *Lectures*, vol. I. p. 60.

“ The many instances of forged miracles, and
 “ prophecies, and supernatural events, which,
 “ in all ages, have either been detected by con-
 “ trary evidence, or which detect themselves
 “ by their absurdity, prove sufficiently the
 “ strong propensity of mankind to the extraor-
 “ dinary and marvellous, and ought reasonably
 “ to beget a suspicion against all relations of
 “ this kind.” Upon the ground here stated,
 we contend for the truth of the Christian mira-
 cles, since the evidence of their credibility has
 never been destroyed by contrary evidence, nor
 detected by their absurdity, which, according to
 Mr. HUME, would have been the case, had they
 been a forgery. Further; “ You have yourself
 “ heard many such marvellous relations stated,
 “ which, being treated with scorn by all the
 “ wise and judicious, have at last been aban-
 “ doned, even by the vulgar. How many
 “ stories of this nature, have, in all ages, been
 “ detected, and exploded in their infancy? How
 “ many more have been celebrated for a time,
 “ and have afterwards sunk into neglect and
 “ oblivion.” We are here presented with a
 criterion of false miracles; and hence we argue
 in favour of Christianity, inasmuch as the mi-
 racles wrought for it's establishment have
 never been exploded, nor sunk into oblivion.
 These miracles having an established credibility,

according to the reasoning of our Author, we ought to receive them as true; for had they been false, it is granted they would have been universally rejected.

“ It forms a strong presumption against all
 “ supernatural and miraculous relations, that they
 “ are observed chiefly to abound amongst igno-
 “ rant and barbarous nations; or, if a civilized
 “ people has ever given admission to them,
 “ that people will be found to have received
 “ them from ignorant and barbarous ancestors.”

The Christian religion was at first preached at Jerusalem, at Athens, and at Rome. This observation therefore will not apply to the establishment of Christianity. These nations were neither ignorant nor barbarous, nor did they receive their accounts from ignorant and barbarous ancestors. Speaking of the impostor ALEXANDER, Mr. H. says, “ Had he fixed his
 “ residence at Athens, the philosophers of that
 “ renowned mart of learning had immediately
 “ spread, throughout the whole Roman empire,
 “ their sense of the matter; which, being sup-
 “ ported by so great an authority, and displayed
 “ by all the force of eloquence, had entirely
 “ opened the eyes of all mankind.” That is, an impostor at Athens must have been exposed to all the world. St. PAUL taught at Athens, and contended with the philosophers, preaching the

resurrection of JESUS CHRIST; “and when they
 “heard of the resurrection of the dead, some
 “mocked; and others said, we will hear thee
 “again of this matter.” He was neither con-
 victed, nor even accused of being an impostor.
 We have a right, therefore, to conclude, upon
 our Author’s own principles, that he was not so.

“*It is strange*, a judicious reader is apt to
 “say, upon the perusal of these wonderful
 “historians, *that such prodigious events do not*
 “*happen in our days.* But it is nothing strange
 “that men should lie in all ages.” I believe
 a *judicious* reader would say no such thing.
 However, till the Author has shown that the
 first preachers of Christianity have no claim to
 our confidence, his position cannot be applied
 against us. It has been asserted, and it is a cir-
 cumstance very favourable to the credibility of
 Christianity, that “the Apostles converted more
 “Jews in one day, than have been won over in
 “the last thousand years.” But the Jews have
 now the Gospel of Christ before them; the first
 preachers of Christianity, therefore, must have
 been furnished with very extraordinary powers,
 to have produced such a conversion.

MR. HUME advances the following argument,
 which, in his opinion, goes to destroy the cre-
 dibility of all miracles. “In matters of religion,

“ whatever is different, is contrary; and it is
 “ impossible the religions of ancient Rome, of
 “ Turkey, of Siam, and of China, should, all of
 “ them, be established on any solid foundation.”
 Upon this, the Author thus argues: That as
 all these religions are pretended to be established
 upon miracles, whatever tends to destroy their
 credibility in one case, tends indirectly to destroy
 the credibility in all the other cases; endeavour-
 ing thus to prove, that, under such a circum-
 stance, not any of the miracles are credible.
 This is plainly no consequence, because the evi-
 dences for the different miracles may rest upon
 very different grounds; in one case, the testi-
 mony in favour of miracles, may be very satis-
 factory; in another, it may not be deserving
 our attention. Did Mr. H. seriously think that
 his readers could be imposed upon by so weak
 an argument, that because all these religions
 cannot be true, they must be all false? But he
 goes on thus: “ This argument may appear
 “ over subtile and refined¹; but is not in reality
 “ different from the reasoning of a judge, who
 “ supposes, that the credit of two witnesses,
 “ maintaining a crime against any one, is de-
 “ stroyed by the testimony of two others, who
 “ affirm him to have been two hundred leagues
 “ distance, at the same instant when the crime

¹ It appears no such thing, quite the contrary.

“is said to have been committed.” The arguments bear no resemblance whatever to each other. Under the latter circumstance, however, the judge would do, just what our Author should have done in the former case, that is, examine further evidence in order to remove the difficulty. “If you seek him, he will be found.”

In respect to the Pagan and Romish miracles, introduced by Mr. HUME to discredit the Christian miracles, we refer the reader to a Work, intitled, *The Criterion, or Miracles examined*: by Dr. DOUGLAS, late *Bishop of Salisbury*; in which is incontrovertibly shown, the great difference between them in point of evidence; establishing the truth of the latter upon the most satisfactory principles, and exposing the pretensions of the former ^m.

After stating the miracles said to have been wrought in France, Mr. H. says, “What have we to oppose to such a cloud of witnesses, but the *absolute impossibility* or *miraculous nature* of the events, which they relate?” Now according to our Author’s definition, a miracle

^m If the evidence for the former miracles, be, as Mr. H. represents, equal to that of the latter, how has it happened, that the former have never been believed, and the latter never been denied, except by a few Infidels? “By their fruits, ye shall know them.”

is possible, it implying no contradiction; he must therefore make the *impossibility* consist in the *limited power* of the Deity; thus denying his omnipotence. He first admits the power of working miracles, and then denies the possibility of execution.

“Is the consequence just, because some human testimony has the utmost force and authority in some cases, that therefore all kinds of testimony must, in all cases, have equal force and authority?” We answer, No. But the case in point is this: Is the consequence just, that since human testimony in some cases has no force and authority, therefore in the present inquiry, all testimony must be rejected without examination? We may here venture to answer, No. The Author seems to have put the *former* question, which is not at all applicable in our present inquiry, to keep out of sight the *latter*, which makes directly against him.

“What greater temptation than to appear a missionary, a prophet, an ambassador, from Heaven? Who would not encounter many dangers and difficulties, in order to attain so sublime a character?” Very few impostors would encounter them; and they who did, would not find it easy to *persuade others that they were prophets and ambassadors from Heaven*, for this is the great difficulty to be

encountered, which, as usual, our Author has carefully concealed. The first preachers of Christianity were themselves not only seriously convinced of their Divine authority, but they performed the more difficult task of convincing the *world* that they were “teachers sent from God.”

“The smallest spark may here (in religious matters) kindle into the greatest flame; because the materials are *always* prepared for it. The *avidum genus auricularum*, the gazing populace, receive greedily, without examination, whatever soothes superstition, and promotes wonder.” The former part “because the materials are *always* prepared for it,” is an assertion without proof, and therefore not to be admitted; the position should have been stated thus: *When* the materials are prepared for it. But this would not have answered Mr. HUME’s purpose. Mankind are represented as *always* subject to religious impositions, that the Author may have an opportunity of attacking Christianity. It is he who “receives greedily, and without examination.”

“Shall we, rather than have recourse to so natural a solution of miracles by credulity and delusion, allow a violation of the laws of nature?” Which of these solutions we should

adopt, depends upon an examination into the evidences on each side. As Mr. H. has not done this, his question proves nothing.

“ A court of judicature, with all the authority, accuracy, and judgment, they can employ, find themselves often at a loss to distinguish between truth and falsehood, in the most recent actions.” It is never under any difficulty in respect to facts, openly committed. The observation, therefore, does not apply to the question under consideration.

“ In the infancy of new religions, the wise and learned commonly esteem the matter too inconsiderable, to deserve their attention and regardⁿ.” In the infancy of the Christian religion, the wise and learned did all in their power to suppress it, but they could not. All human means were too weak to oppose it with any effect. After a fair contest with worldly power, and worldly wisdom, Christianity prevailed.

That reasoning must be false, which attempts to prove that no evidence can render a fact

ⁿ The doctrines of Christianity were not only many of them new, but also very extraordinary, and such as must necessarily have roused the attention of mankind. They could not be looked upon with indifference; for when the religious establishment of a country is attacked, it will necessarily induce a fear, that the civil constitution may be in danger of a subversion.

credible, which, it is granted, might exist. This the Author himself has admitted; for he says (*Dial. on Nat. Rel.*), that “we must admit a fact, when it is supported by all the arguments it’s nature admits of.” Now Mr. H. admits the possibility of miracles; it is therefore possible that miracles may be wrought to prove a Divine commission. And yet he says, that “no human testimony can have such force, as to prove a miracle, and make it a just foundation for any such (popular) system of religion.” This position, therefore, is inadmissible upon our Author’s own principles. Further, it would limit the power of God in matters where no contradiction is implied, and therefore in circumstances where there exists no impossibility. The assertion must be false, or you take away God’s omnipotence.

After all the arguments advanced by Mr. H. against the credibility of miracles, the Reader will be surprised to find him making the following confession: “I beg the limitations here made, may be remarked, when I say, that a miracle can never be proved, so as to be the foundation of a system of religion^o; for I own, that otherwise, there may possibly be

^o It is certainly more worthy of God, to work miracles upon such an occasion, than upon any other: it is therefore so far more probable that he will.

“ miracles, or violations of the usual course of
 “ nature, of such a kind as to admit of proof
 “ from human testimony^p; though, perhaps^q,
 “ it will be impossible to find any such in all
 “ the records of history. Thus^r, suppose, all
 “ authors, in all languages, were to agree, that
 “ from January 1, 1680, there was a total
 “ darkness over the earth for eight days: Sup-
 “ pose that the tradition for this extraordinary
 “ event was still strong and lively among the
 “ people: That all travellers who return from
 “ foreign countries, bring us accounts of the
 “ same tradition, without the least variation or
 “ contradiction: It is evident that our present
 “ philosophers, instead of doubting the fact,
 “ ought to receive it as certain, and ought to
 “ search for the causes whence it might be de-
 “ rived.” What! search for the *physical* cause

^p This concession places the incredibility of a miraculous event, not on the extraordinary nature of the event, but on the want of evidence. How far this is consistent with our Author's preceding principles, or inconsistent with our belief of the Christian miracles, we may leave the Reader to determine.

^q We cannot admit a conclusion founded upon a mere *perhaps*.

^r From an introduction, *thus*, we look for some connection between what follows, and the preceding part; whereas, it has no reference whatever to any thing which has gone before; for not being an historical fact, it is no exemplification; no confirmation; offers nothing on which you can deduce any conclusion, that can be applied to what has been previously stated. But at all events, Christianity must be attacked.

of a miracle? For the Author gives it as an instance where a miracle may be rendered credible. A plain contradiction in terms. This instance was clearly intended to cast suspicion upon the miraculous darkness at our Saviour's crucifixion. "But suppose that all the historians who treat of England, should agree, that on the first of January, 1600, Queen ELIZABETH died; that both before and after her death, she was seen by her physicians and the whole court, as is usual with persons of her rank; and that after being interred a month, she appeared again, resumed the throne, and governed England for three years: I must confess that I should be surprised at the concurrence of so many odd circumstances; but should not have the least inclination to believe so miraculous an event." Nor should I; but I do not see how this invalidates the evidences of our Saviour's resurrection, which it undoubtedly was intended to ridicule. It is greatly in favour of the truth of Christianity, that our Author, with his disposition and abilities, dare not come fairly and openly forward to attack it^s.

^s It may be proper to oppose the attacks on Christianity, by showing the weakness of the arguments which are brought against it; but its claim to a Divine authority is good, until its establishment can be satisfactorily accounted for, by the operation of merely human means. No arguments can support an insufficient cause. We may here apply Mr. HUME's own observation: "A man who
" hides

“ But should this miracle (the second related
 “ in the last paragraph) be ascribed to any new
 “ system of religion; men in all ages have been
 “ so much imposed upon by ridiculous stories
 “ of that kind, that this very circumstance
 “ would be a *full proof* of a cheat¹, and suffi-
 “ cient with all men of sense, not only to make
 “ them reject the fact, but even reject it with-
 “ out farther examination.” It would be *no*
proof at all. Upon the principles we have laid
 down, the Author would have done right in
 rejecting the miracle, but did wrong in reject-
 ing it upon the ground he assumes.

We are desired “ to compare the instances
 “ of the violations of truth, in the testimony of
 “ men, with those of the violation of the laws
 “ of nature, by miracles, in order to judge which
 “ of them is most likely and probable.” I can
 make no sense of this passage. Mr. H. cannot
 mean, that we should at once reject all miracles,
 for this reason, that they are less likely to
 happen, than that a man should be guilty of
 asserting a falsehood. He then goes on thus :

“ hides himself, confesses as evidently the superiority of his
 “ enemy, as another who fairly delivers up his arms.” *Treat.*
on Hum. Nat. p. 81.

¹ The old argument again; in religious matters, all men are
 “ knaves and fools.”

“As the violations of truth are more common
 “in the testimony concerning religious miracles,
 “than in that concerning any other matter of
 “fact; this must diminish very much the au-
 “thority of the former testimony, and make
 “us form a general resolution, never to lend
 “any attention to it, with whatever specious
 “pretence it may be covered.” The position
 respecting the violation of truth, is a mere
 assertion, and therefore cannot be admitted.
 But if we were to admit it, does it follow that
 all miraculous relations are to be rejected with-
 out examination? Here we have premises not
 established, and conclusions which are not con-
 sequences from them. Mr. H. proceeds thus:
 “Lord BACON seems to have embraced the same
 “principles of reasoning;” for he says, “Every
 “relation must be considered as suspicious,
 “which depends in any degree upon religion,
 “as the prodigies of LIVY;” that is, we must
 be very cautious about receiving it. But his
 Lordship does not advise us to “reject without
 examination;” on the contrary, he tells us
 that in all our inquiries into the nature of very
 extraordinary relations, “they must be done
 “with the most *severe scrutiny*, lest we depart
 “from truth.” A position not very well agree-
 ing with our Author’s principles.

In order to ridicule Christianity, Mr. H. says,

“ Our most holy Religion ^u is founded on *faith*,
 “ not on reason.” Now our faith in the gospel
 dispensation, is a conviction formed upon rati-
 onal evidence. The Scriptures themselves
 charge us, “ to prove all things ” — “ believe
 not every spirit.” Our faith therefore is not
 a blind assent, as our Author would have his
 readers believe, but conviction upon reasonable
 grounds. Are we to impute this misrepresenta-
 tion to ignorance ?

“ Let us examine^x the miracles of the *Penta-*
 “ *teuch*, not as the testimony of God, but as
 “ a human production. Here then we are first
 “ to consider a book, presented to us by a bar-
 “ barous and ignorant people^y, written in an
 “ age when they were still more barbarous, and
 “ in all probability long after the fact which it
 “ relates; corroborated by no concurring testi-

^u In his *Essay on a particular Providence and a Future State*,
 Mr. H. thus states his notion of *Religion*: “ All the philosophy in
 “ the world, and all the *religion* which is nothing but a *species of*
 “ *philosophy*, will never carry us beyond the usual course of expe-
 “ rience, or give us different measures of conduct and behaviour,
 “ from those which are furnished by reflections on common life.”
 This is a direct rejection of all revelation.

^x Here is no *examination* into the evidence for the truth of the
 miracles, as the Author proposes; he has only given us a state-
 ment of what the miracles are: thus, without any inquiry into the
 evidence for them, he concludes against them.

^y They were neither barbarous nor ignorant.

“mony”, and resembling those fabulous ac-
 “counts, which every nation gives of it’s origin.
 “Upon reading this book, we find it full of
 “prodigies and miracles. It gives an account
 “of a state of the world, and of human
 “nature, entirely different from the present.
 “Of our fall from that state: Of the age of
 “man, extended to near a thousand years; Of
 “the destruction of the world, by the deluge:
 “Of the arbitrary choice of one people, as the
 “favourites of heaven; and that people the
 “countrymen of the Author: Of their delive-
 “rance from bondage, by prodigies the most
 “astonishing imaginable: I desire any one to
 “lay his hand upon his heart, and after a serious
 “consideration declare, whether he thinks that
 “the falsehood of such a book, supported by
 “such a testimony, would be more extraordinary
 “and miraculous than all the miracles it relates;
 “which is, however, necessary to make it be
 “received, according to the measures of pro-
 “bability above established.” The Author has

z “A number of difficulties wholly unanswerable, could never
 “weigh with me, against the separation of the Israelites, the go-
 “vernment and history of the Jews. I call the separation, as it
 “has been continued, the strongest, the most undeniable ‘concur-
 “ring testimony.’ Mr. HUME says, the history of the Pentateuch
 “is ‘corroborated by no concurring testimony.’” Dr. HEY’s *Lect.*
 Vol. I. p. 201. See also, STILLINGFLEET’S *Origines Sacre*, B. iii.
 c. 2. f. 5.; BRYANT’S *Antient Mythology*; and MAURICE’S *History*
of Hindostan.

here put the strength of his argument against the credibility of the miracles related in the Pentateuch, to a test which will not support it. For every Jew, every sincere Christian, *can* lay his hand upon his heart, and declare that he thinks the falsehood of such a book, supported by such a testimony, would be more extraordinary than all the miracles it relates. What then becomes of his argument? He puts the credibility of miracles, upon *personal persuasion* after *serious examination*, and we have no objection to rest our defence upon such ground. But with many, “there is more goes to *persuasion* than *reason* and *demonstration*.”

“What we have said of miracles, may be applied, without any variation, to prophecies: “and indeed all prophecies are real miracles, “and as such only, can be admitted as proofs “of any revelation.” It is not true, that we can apply to prophecy, what is said of miracles, because the evidences for prophecy and for miracles, rest altogether upon different grounds. Prophecy is a miraculous history, and its truth rests upon the accomplishment of the prophecy; the evidence for miracles rests upon testimony, and upon the consequent effects. The Author wants to bring miracles and prophecy to the same ground of credibility, that he may reject

them together; not daring to attack the latter, but in this indirect manner. Some of the prophecies are so very clearly and circumstantially related, that they could not be misunderstood, even at the time of their delivery; and their accomplishments have agreed so exactly with the predictions, that it has been out of the power of Infidelity, to raise even a plausible objection against them. Infidels have, therefore, turned their attacks more directly against miracles. But admitting the interposition of the Deity in the former case, it at once removes the difficulty of admitting it in the latter, that is, from the extraordinary nature of the fact. Miracles and Prophecy have the same ends in view; that is, to establish a Divine interposition in matters relating to man in his moral and religious capacity. To the fulfilment of some of the prophecies, we ourselves are eye-witnesses; and they remain a signal monument, that "God hath visited his people."

The obscurity of Mr. H's two last sentences, effectually secures them against an answer.

The observations here made upon the *Principles* and *Reasoning* from which Mr. HUME draws his conclusion against the credibility of miracles, are intended principally to show, that the former cannot be admitted, or that the latter

is defective; and hence, that his arguments furnish nothing conclusive to affect the grounds upon which we rest our belief of the Scripture miracles. The insufficiency and weakness of every attempt to set aside the evidence in defence of Christianity, afford a further confirmation of it's truth.

We will conclude our remarks with Mr. H's own words: "We need only ask such a sceptic, what his meaning is? and what he proposes by all these curious researches? He is immediately at a loss, and knows not what to answer." *Acad. or Scept. Phil.*

THE principles advanced by MR. HUME, in the Essay which has been the subject of our examination, leads directly to a denial of all revelation; for no revelation of the will of God can be made, but by a miracle. It may not be improper, therefore, briefly to state the dangerous tendency of our Author's doctrine.

When revelation is rejected, the light of nature becomes the principle of action; and the will of God is confined to the investigation of human reason. Every unbeliever has a theory which directs him in his practice, and men are

left to acknowledge no laws but those of their own making. Accordingly we find, that there was no unity of sentiment amongst the Heathen philosophers, respecting our duties towards God, our neighbour, or ourselves. Thus, under a general prevalence of infidelity, nothing would be found to bind men together. Right and wrong would become a mere matter of opinion, and no permanent security would exist for co-operation amongst mankind. The defect of principles appear in their application to practice^a. Make a catalogue of the blackest vices, and you will scarcely find one but has been defended by those who have wanted the light of revelation to direct them. Scarcely a precept forbidden in the Decalogue, but has been acted upon from principle. And in cases where moral conduct is tolerably correct, unbelievers are more indebted for their morality, to the influence of Christianity in the good effects of it's practice, and the insensible workings which it's

^a Mr. HUME says, "Instances of license, daily multiplying, will weaken the scandal with one sex, and teach the other, by degrees, to adopt the famous maxim of LA FONTAINE, with regard to female infidelity, *That if one knows it, it is but a small matter; if one knows it not, it is nothing.*" (*A Dialogue.*) This is a specimen of Mr. HUME's morality. To use his own words, the effect of his principles must be, "To free men from one restraint (religion) upon their passions, and make the *infringement* of the LAWS of equity and society, more easy and secure." *Particular Providence and Future State.*

precepts have upon the mind, than to their pretended light of nature. Like the rain which descends indiscriminately on the just and on the unjust, Christianity pours the streams of its bounty, into the hand which is raised against it.

When a man acknowledges a God, but denies all revelation, the principles of action which he deduces from the light of nature, are, at best, but uncertain conjectures; for though “the Heavens declare the glory of God,” and “the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead;” yet the things thus understood, are principles which relate to him as the Creator and Governor of the world, rather than matters which lead to a knowledge of our various duties. Admitting, therefore, a providence, we ought to expect further communications of his will. We must not circumscribe the Divine goodness, and say, “Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further.” If revelation be rejected, it can only be upon the ground that it is unnecessary. But if our reason be insufficient to comprehend the nature and attributes of God, it must necessarily be insufficient to investigate the duties which are due to him. If the Gentile world “changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible

“man, and to birds, four-footed beasts, and “creeping things,” further instruction was undoubtedly necessary.

From following the light of nature as their guide, unbelievers are not aware of the fatal consequences into which they may be led. An artful use of terms often becomes a snare to the unwary. *Nature* is an ambiguous word, and tends to keep out of sight, the Creator and Governor of the universe; hiding the Deity by his own works. By keeping what they call *Nature* in view, they forget God. This is not a dispute about words; for in practice, it tends to subvert the foundation of all religion. By ascribing to Nature what we ought to ascribe to God, we rob him of all veneration. When we are informed, that “it is the glorious God that maketh the thunder,” the mind feels a strong impression of religious fear, and awe; but when we are told, that it is only an operation of nature, it passeth away without producing any devout affections. The evil lies deeper than is generally imagined. The language of Scripture is very different. “God said, Let there be light, and there was light.”—“God said, Let the earth bring forth grass.”—“God said, Let the earth bring forth every living creature.”—“God said, Let us make man after our own image.”—“If God so clothe the grass of

the field." Let us speak in this language, and then, as we cannot be misunderstood, we cannot mislead. Change the name GOD into the term *Nature*, and you gradually and insensibly wear out of the mind, all reverence for the Deity; and this leads to a denial of his existence. The progress of Infidelity is by imperceptible degrees; and thus getting possession of the mind, it is not easily removed. Experience shows the great difficulty of reclaiming an unbeliever, inasmuch as his recovery must be brought about, principally by his own exertions, the exercises necessary for which, constitute the very stumbling-block of which he complains. We must therefore look for the fruits of our warnings, our admonitions, and our arguments, not so much in recovering those who have fallen, as in saving others from being misled. Infidelity is a plant of unnatural growth: it has neither root for it's support, nor are it's branches fair to be looked at. Unlike the tree of knowledge, which was "good for food, pleasant to the eye, and to be desired to make one wise," it's fruit can hold out no temptation.

THE END.

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an APPENDIX.



BY

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1807.



TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND
GEORGE
LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

MY LORD,

THE Attempts lately made by some eminent Philosophers upon the Continent, to account for the order of the physical world from material causes, and thus to exclude the notion of a Deity, have not escaped your Lordship's attention; and the communication with which you were pleased to favour me on that subject, gave occasion to the following Discourses. The Public will therefore see the peculiar propriety of addressing them to your Lordship. But they have a further claim upon your pro-

DEDICATION.

tection, since a view of the evidences of Natural Theology will necessarily tend to facilitate the admission of the great truths of Revealed Religion, in defence of which, your Lordship has shown yourself, upon all occasions, so able and zealous an Advocate.

That your Lordship may long continue to enjoy the high station in the Church, which you fill with so much honour to yourself, and advantage to the Public, is the sincere wish, of

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's very obliged,

and most obedient

humble Servant,

Cambridge,
March 9, 1807.

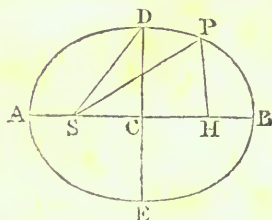
S. VINCE.

INTRODUCTION.

1. As the following Discourses may fall into the hands of those who are unacquainted with the common principles of Astronomy, it was thought proper to prefix a short and familiar introduction to that science, that the Reader may not have the trouble of turning to other works, for such explanations as he may find necessary.

2. The Solar System comprehends the *Sun*, the *primary Planets*, the *secondary Planets*, and *Comets*. The Sun is situated as a center*,

* The Sun is not situated exactly in the center of the orbit, the nature of which we will here describe. If a string SPH be



fixed at the two ends S, H , and a pencil at P stretch the string tight, and be carried round, it will describe a curve line $PD\Delta EBP$ called an *Ellipse*. Now if we conceive the Sun to

about which all the others revolve. The *primary* planets revolve about the Sun in an ellipse, the Sun being in one of the *foci*, as explained in the note. The ancient Astronomers discovered, besides the Earth, five primary planets, *Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter,*

be situated at *S*, the curve *PDAEBP* represents the orbit described by a primary planet. The straight line *ASCHB* is called the *major axis*; and if *AB* be divided into two equal parts at *C*, and *DCE* be drawn perpendicular to *AB*, then *DE* is called the *minor axis*. The points *S, H*, are called *foci*; so that the Sun is in one of the foci of the orbit of each planet. The distance *SD* is called the *mean distance* from *S* of a planet revolving in the ellipse; for instance, if *SB* be 12, and *SA* be 8, then *SD* is 10, the middle or mean number between 8 and 12. The distance *SC* is called the *eccentricity* of the orbit. Now for the same length of string, the farther *S* and *H* are from each other, and therefore the further they are from *C*, the more the orbit differs from a circle; so that the greater or less the eccentricity *SC* is, the more or less does the orbit differ from a circle. This is the case in respect to the different primary planets, the orbits of which are not all equally near a circle; and even for the same orbit, the eccentricity varies. The orbits of comets differ very much from circles, the focus *S* being at a great distance from *C*, and comparatively very near *A*; so that their orbits are very long and narrow; as may be represented by fixing the ends of the string *S, H*, further from each other. The two points *A, B*, are called *apsides*: *A* is called the *lower apside*, and *B* the *higher*. The point *A* is also called the *perihelion*, and *B* the *aphelion*. The nearer a planet is to the Sun, the faster it moves; so that a planet moves fastest at *A*, and slowest at *B*; and it's velocity gradually increases as it moves from *B* to *A*, and decreases by the same steps, as it moves from *A* to *B*; and this motion is regulated according to such a law, that *P* representing the place of a planet, as the planet moves in it's orbit, the line *SP* sweeps over equal areas in equal times.

Saturn; but in the year 1781, Dr. HERSCHEL discovered another primary planet; and this he called the *Georgian*, in honour of his present MAJESTY. This planet is not visible to the naked eye, as all the others are. Reckoning *from* the Sun, the following is the order of their situations: *Mercury, Venus, the Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Georgian*. As the orbits of these planets do not differ much from circles, if about a point as a center you describe seven circles, whose radii are as 4, 7, 10, 15, 52, 95, 190. they will very nearly represent the orbits of the planets, such numbers being nearly in the same proportion as their distances from the Sun. These numbers may be taken from a scale of equal parts. But besides these, there have very lately been discovered, by some foreign Astronomers, three other primary planets, extremely small when compared with the rest, and invisible to the naked eye; they are called *Pallas, Ceres, Juno*: these are situated between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter; the two first very nearly, if not accurately, at the same distance from the Sun; not that their orbits coincide, inasmuch as they have different forms, and lie in different positions; by which, provision is made that the bodies may not interfere with each other. The distance of the third is not yet determined.

At present, therefore, we have the knowledge of *ten* primary planets. All these revolve about the Sun in the *same* direction, that is, from west to east. The paths described by the planets are contained within a certain extent of the heavens, called the *Zodiac*, in the middle of which the Sun *appears* to move, and to make one revolution in the course of a year. This *apparent* motion of the Sun, arises from the real motion of the Earth. If you place a ball in the middle of a round table, to represent the Sun, and carry the eye round the edge, you then refer the Sun to the opposite side; and the Sun thus appears to move round the table. Whenever the motion of the Sun is therefore spoken of, it means the *apparent* motion. The path which the Sun appears to describe in the heavens, in the course of a year, is called the *Ecliptic*.

3. The *secondary* planets are eighteen in number; one belongs to the Earth; four to Jupiter; seven to Saturn, and six to the Georgian. All these revolve about their respective primaries, as their centers of motion. Describing therefore so many circles about each primary, they may represent the orbits of the *satellites**. Hence, the secondary planets

* The orbits of some of them are ellipses, not differing much from circles.

have a two-fold motion ; they move about their respective primaries, and are carried along with their primaries about the Sun. The motion of a satellite may therefore be represented by that of a nail in the wheel of a chariot ; for the nail has a motion about the center of the wheel, and is carried with the wheel about the center of the Earth. All the planets are *opaque* and *spherical* bodies ; and their apparent brightness arises from the rays of the Sun being reflected from them to the Earth. That the Earth is not a plane surface, is manifest from hence, that when ships recede from the shore, you first lose sight of the hull, and then of the masts from the lower ends gradually upwards, till at last the whole disappears ; which appearance can only arise from the surface of the Earth being convex. Also, the boundary of the shadow of the Earth upon the Moon, in a lunar eclipse, shows that the Earth is spherical. Another proof of the spherical form of the Earth arises from hence, that navigators have set off in one direction, and continuing their courses, have come home in the opposite direction. The spherical form of all the bodies, arises from the mutual attraction of all the parts. A drop of water puts on the form of a globe, for the same reason.

4. The other bodies in the system are

comets, of which there are three or four hundred; they all describe ellipses about the Sun in one of the foci. These ellipses are very long and narrow, so that the Sun is situated comparatively very near one end of the major axis, and therefore at a great distance from the other. Hence, in their perihelion they approach very near the Sun*, and then recede to very great distances from him. In their appearance they differ very much from the planets; their discs are not very well defined; and many of them have a stream of light flowing from them in a direction opposite to the Sun, called a *tail*: this increases in length as the comet approaches the Sun; is longest in the perihelion; and then it decreases. These bodies have generally been supposed to consist of a central solid part, called the *Nucleus*, surrounded by a very thick, extensive atmosphere. They move in all directions, and their orbits lie in all positions; so that they

* The comet in 1680, when in its perihelion, was less distant from the Sun than a sixth part of the Sun's diameter; at which time, Sir I. Newton computed it's heat to be 28000 greater than our summer heat, and 2000 times greater than red-hot iron. He also computed, that a globe of red-hot iron as big as the Earth, would be 50000 years in cooling. Notwithstanding therefore comets ascend to such vast distances from the Sun, they may still retain a great quantity of heat. This is a ground of probability, that these bodies may be inhabited.

are found in all parts of the heavens. The periodic time of only one of them is known. Thus it appears, that comets form a particular class of bodies, distinct from that of the planets. Very few of them are visible to the naked eye.

5. The *periodic time* of a body, is the time in which it makes a complete revolution in it's orbit about the central body. Now Astronomers have discovered, that there is a fixed relation between the periodic times of the primary planets, and their *mean* distances from the Sun. The law is this: Take any two planets; square* their periodic times, and cube* their mean distances; then the proportion between the squares, is the same as that between the cubes. If the squares be in the proportion of 2 to 5, the cubes will be as 2 to 5. This law is therefore generally expressed thus: *The squares of the periodic times are as the cubes of their mean distances from the Sun.* The same law holds for the periodic times and distances of the *secondary* planets about their respective primaries; that is, those of Jupiter compared together; those of Saturn compared together; and those of the Georgian

* To *square* a number, is to multiply it into itself: thus, the *square* of 7, is 7 times 7, or 49; and if we again multiply the *square* by the same number, the product is it's *cube*; therefore 49 multiplied by 7 gives 343, the cube of 7.

compared together: but we must not compare those belonging to one planet, with those belonging to another.

The following Table contains the periodic times of the primary planets about the Sun, in days, hours, minutes and seconds; and their *mean* distances from the Sun in English miles.

Planets.	Periodic Times.				Mean Distances.
	D.	H.	M.	S.	
<i>Mercury</i>	87.	23.	15.	44	36165653
<i>Venus</i>	224.	16.	49.	11	67596129
<i>Earth</i>	365.	6.	9.	12	93451300
<i>Mars</i>	686.	23.	30.	36	142391746
<i>Pallas</i>	1681.	5.	16.	48	276712300
<i>Ceres</i>	1682.	6.	0.	0	276723100
<i>Jupiter</i>	4332.	14.	27.	11	486208424
<i>Saturn</i>	10759.	1.	51.	11	891590818
<i>Georgian</i>	30737.				1794573349

The *mean* periodic time of the Moon is 27^d. 7^h. 43'. 12"; for the lunar months are shorter in summer than in winter; and her *mean* distance from the Earth is 239029 miles, for the Moon is nearer the Earth in summer than in winter.

6. Besides the motions of the planets about

the Sun, they have a rotation about one of their diameters, called an *Axis*. In consequence of this, they are not perfect spheres, but what are called *oblate spheroids*, the axis being the shortest diameter; so that their form is like that of an orange, the parts at the extremities of the axis (called the *Poles*) being a little flattened. This change of figure arises from the tendency which all bodies have to fly off from the center about which they revolve, called a *centrifugal* force; as by whirling a stone in a sling, it has a tendency to fly off, and actually does so, when you let go one end of the sling. A familiar proof of this may also be seen in the whirling of a mop, where the threads are all stretched out, and the mop becomes flat, that diameter about which it turns being greatly shortened, and the other lengthened. This rotation of the planets about their axes, is the cause of the succession of day and night, the parts of their surfaces being successively turned towards the Sun; it being day in those parts which are presented to the Sun, and night in the other. One rotation therefore makes a day and a night. Their rotations are determined from the spots observed on their surfaces; by which it has been found, that Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, revolve about an axis; and, from analogy, we conclude the same is true for the other planets. Saturn makes

a rotation in 10 hours, 16 minutes; Jupiter in 9 hours, 56 minutes; Mars in 24 hours, 39½ minutes, and Venus in 23 hours, 21 minutes. The Sun also turns about an axis in 25 days, 14 hours, 8 minutes.

7. If the surface of the Earth be divided into two equal parts by a circle which is every where equi-distant from the two poles, that circle is called the *Equator*, and the two parts are called the *northern* and *southern hemispheres*. That which we inhabit is called the *northern*; and that pole (or extremity of the axis) which lies in this hemisphere, is called the *north* pole; and the other, the *south* pole.

8. The *axis* about which a planet revolves, is not perpendicular to the plane of it's orbit; and this is the cause of the variety of seasons; of which we have this easy representation. Upon a round table, place a lamp in the middle to represent the Sun. Take a ball, and put a wire through it, to represent it's axis, and consider this as the planet. Incline the axis to the plane of the table, and keeping the axis in this position, that is, always parallel to the first position, carry the ball round upon the edge of the table; and you will see, that first one of the poles, and then the other, will be successively inclined towards the lamp in the middle, and the opposite pole will be in the dark part; thus

the poles will be successively enlightened. In this manner the Sun illuminates each pole of the Earth; and considering those parts of it's surface to which he is vertical, he will appear to move backwards and forwards over the surface from one hemisphere to the other, passing over the equator; and thus will he be half a year in (or over) the northern hemisphere, making our summer, and half a year in the southern, making our winter; thus causing the variety of seasons. The points where he passes over the equator, are called the *equinoctial points*; and at that time, the days and nights are each 12 hours long all over the earth, except at the poles. It is very remarkable, that the equinoctial points coincided with the position of the major axis of the Earth's orbit, at the time of the Creation, according to our Chronology. If you turn the ball about it's axis, the parts will be successively enlightened and darkened, representing the succession of day and night. The Earth turns about her axis from west to east in 24 hours, which causes the *apparent* diurnal motion of all the heavenly bodies from east to west.

9. In respect to the secondary planets, the following remarkable circumstance takes place. The Moon, the four satellites of Jupiter, and one of Saturn, are found by observation to turn about an axis in the same time as they respec-

tively revolve about their primaries; and this was discovered, by observing that they always kept the same face towards the primary. In the case of the Moon, this is obvious to the naked eye. And although observations have not yet been able to ascertain, whether the same be true for the other satellites of Saturn, and those of the Georgian, yet from the uniformity which we perceive in the system, we conclude that the same is true for all the secondaries. As the Moon gives light to our Earth, by reflecting the Sun's rays, so our Earth gives light to the Moon, and becomes a Moon to the lunar inhabitants; and as the surface of the Earth is about 13 times greater than the surface of the Moon, our Earth appears 13 times greater to them than the Moon does to us. And as the Moon keeps the same face always towards the Earth, our Earth always retains the same situation in respect to the horizon belonging to any of the inhabitants of the Moon, not rising and setting as the Moon does.

10. Although the planets revolve about the Sun from west to east, yet, owing to their motions and that of the Earth, they sometimes *appear* to move in the heavens, in an opposite direction, or become *retrograde*, and sometimes to be *stationary*. The first of these circumstances arises from the Earth moving faster than the planet

and in the same direction, by which means the planet is left behind; and by referring it to the fixed stars in the heavens, it will *appear* to go backwards amongst them, or have an *apparent* retrograde motion in respect to it's real motion. When the motions of both in the same direction are the same, the planet goes on equally with the Earth, and it does not appear to change it's place, or it becomes stationary. *Mercury* and *Venus* being nearer the Sun than the Earth is, can never appear opposite to the Sun; so that they recede only to certain distances from the Sun, and then approach him again; vibrating backwards and forwards, as it were, on each side of the Sun. Thus they have the same phases as the Moon. Sometimes they appear to pass over the Sun's disc, and this is called a *Transit*. When *Venus* is to the east of the Sun, she appears in the evening after sun-set, and is then the *evening* star; when she is to the west of the Sun, she appears in the morning before sun-rise, and is then a *morning* star. The other planets being further from the Sun than the Earth is, are sometimes opposite to the Sun, and may be seen through the whole of the night. The planets are distinguished from the fixed stars, by their shining with a steady light; not twinkling as the fixed stars do.

11. As you recede from the Sun, or any hot

and luminous body, the intensity of light and heat *decreases* in the same proportion as the squares of the distance *increase*; or, as it is usually expressed, *The intensity of light and heat varies inversely as the square of the distance.* For example: at 4 times the distance, the light and heat are each 16 times less; at 7 times the distance, they are 49 times less; and so on. The *Georgian* planet is 19 times further from the Sun than the Earth is, and the square of 19 is 361; hence, the light and heat at that planet are 361 times less than at the Earth. It is easy to conceive, that the constitutions of the inhabitants of the different planets, may be adapted to the quantities of light and heat which they receive. NIEWENTYŃ computed that in one second of time there flows from a candle 4186600000000000000000000000000000000000000 particles of light. The velocity of light is at the rate of about 11 millions of miles in a minute.

12. The Earth is encompassed with a thin, transparent, elastic fluid, called the *Atmosphere*; growing rarer the higher you ascend. It's use is for respiration; for the propagation of sounds, and the conveyance of smells; for the support of vapours, raised by the heat of the Sun, for the purpose of producing showers to refresh the Earth, in order to bring forth it's fruits. It

serves to reflect and refract the rays of the Sun, by which they are thrown in all directions, and thus the whole heaven becomes illuminated; whereas, if there had been no atmosphere, we should have received those rays only which come directly from the Sun, and all the other parts would have appeared dark; and the stars would have been seen in the day. Hence also, the cause of the morning and evening twilight, arising from the Sun's rays being refracted to us by the atmosphere, when he is below the horizon. Though so light a fluid, it's weight has been computed to be 12043468800000000000lbs.

13. The planet Saturn is encompassed with a thin, flat *ring*, or, as it is now found, with two rings, lying one within the other, edge-ways towards the planet, and detached from it. Their planes pass through the equator of Saturn. If you cut a circular annulus out of a card, and divide it into two parts by a concentric circle, leaving the inner breadth about 3 times that of the outer, and then put a ball within, of such a size, that the space between the ball and the annulus may be a little larger than the breadth of the annulus, you will have a representation of Saturn and his two rings. That side next the Sun is bright, like the body of the planet. The rings revolve in their own plane; and not being of a regular figure, their center of gravity

is at a small distance from the center of Saturn. The center of gravity therefore being carried about Saturn by the rotation of the rings, gives the rings a centrifugal force (Art. 6.); this is combined with their attraction to the planet, and they are retained by these two forces, in the same manner as a planet is retained in its orbit (Art. 16.) M. LAPLACE computed the time of their rotation to be $10^{\text{h.}} 33'. 36''$, agreeing very nearly with the time found by Dr. HERSCHEL from observation.

14. The planes of the orbits of the planets are inclined to the plane of the Earth's orbit, called the plane of the *Ecliptic*, or that plane in which the Sun appears to move. This may be thus represented. Take a piece of pasteboard to represent the plane of the ecliptic; on which describe a circle representing the Earth's orbit, the Sun being in the center. Through this center cut a straight slit, in which put a circle of any size different from that which represents the Earth's orbit, and incline it nearly to the plane of the pasteboard, making its center coincide with the center of the circle representing the Earth's orbit; so that half may be on one side of the pasteboard, and half on the other. Then the *periphery* of this circle will represent the orbit described by a planet. The points where the orbit of the planet cuts the pasteboard, are

called the *Nodes* of the planet's orbit; and the angle which the plane of the orbit of the planet makes with the plane of the Earth's orbit, is called the *Inclination* of it's orbit.

15. An eclipse of the *Sun* is caused by the Moon's passing between the Earth and the Sun, in the course of her revolution about the Earth; thus obscuring part, or the whole of the Sun. This therefore happens at the *new* Moon, the Moon then having lost all her light, by turning her dark part towards the Earth. An eclipse of the *Moon* is caused by her entering into the shadow of the Earth, or when the Earth interposes between the Sun and Moon, whereby she loses the light which she received from the Sun, and thus disappears, either in part, or altogether. This therefore happens at the *full* Moon, when she is opposite to the Sun. The reason why eclipses do not happen every new and full Moon, is this: The Moon's orbit is inclined to the plane of the Earth's orbit, in the manner described in the last article; on which account, there is not an interposition every new and full Moon, the Moon at those times being often *out* of the plane of the Earth's orbit.

16. All the bodies in the system are found to have a tendency to move towards each other; this tendency is called *Gravitation*, and the cause is called *Attraction*. We have before observed,

(Art. 6.), that when a body revolves about a center, it has a tendency to fly off from that center, called it's *Centrifugal* force; and thus all the planets, by revolving about the Sun, have a tendency to recede from the Sun; and they would actually fly off, were they not restrained in consequence of being forced towards the Sun, by what is called his attraction, denominated a *Centripetal* force; though we are entirely ignorant how this effect is produced. And it is by a proper adjustment of these two forces, that is, the tendency to recede from the Sun, from their revolving about him, and the tendency to approach the Sun, by his attraction, that they are retained in their orbits. In like manner, the secondary planets are retained in their orbits about their primaries. And in *all* cases where one body revolves about another, the revolving body describes equal areas in equal times about it's central body; that is, as *P* revolves about *S* (See fig. p. 1.) the line *PS* sweeps over equal areas in equal times.

17. At different distances from the Sun, the attractive power varies in strength, according to the following law. Take the distances 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, &c. then the squares of these distances are 1, 4, 9, 16, 25, &c. Now if at the distance 1, we call the attraction 1, at the distance 2,

it is 4 times less ; at the distance 3, it is 9 times less ; at the distance 4, it is 16 times less ; at the distance 5, it is 25 times less, and so on. So that we usually say, *The attraction varies inversely as the squares of the distances* ; for, in the same proportion as the squares increase, the attraction decreases. The same law holds for the attraction between any two bodies. Also, the greater the quantity of matter which there is in any body, the greater will be the attraction in proportion. The Earth contains about seventy times more matter than the Moon ; therefore, the Earth attracts the Moon about seventy times more than the Moon attracts the Earth ; so that if these bodies could be placed at rest, they would immediately, by their mutual attraction, begin to approach each other, and the Moon would move seventy times faster than the Earth.

18. If in the system there was only one planet revolving about the Sun, it would (as stated in note, Art. 1.) describe an ellipse *AEBD* about the Sun in the focus *S*. But as all the planets attract each other, this regular curve, which each would describe were there no other bodies, is destroyed by the attractions of the other planets ; and thus the real path described by a planet is changed from an ellipse into an irregular curve, and it's motion becomes very complex. We will state a little more

particularly, the effects which are produced by the attraction of the other planets. Instead of each planet describing an ellipse about the Sun in one of the foci, the ellipse varies as follows : The excentricity SC is subject to a continual alteration, so that the orbit either approaches nearer to, or recedes further from a circle, according to circumstances ; the length of the minor axis DE continually varies ; the length of the major axis AB continues always the same, but it's *position* is always changing. Thus much for the alteration of the *form* of the orbits, and *position* of their major axes. But the orbits are subject to further irregularities, which we will here explain.

19. Place a ball in the middle of a round table, to represent the Sun ; and let another ball, representing the Earth, be supposed to move upon the table at the edge, round the former. Then the plane of the table will represent the plane of the ecliptic. Now if there were no other bodies to attract the Earth, the Earth would constantly move upon the table round the Sun. But the orbits of the other planets being inclined to that of the Earth (Art. 14.), some of the planets will be above the table, and some below ; the consequence of which must be, that those bodies, by attracting the Earth, will draw the Earth *off* the table, and thereby

change the plane in which it was before moving; that is, change the plane of the ecliptic. Which way this change is made, depends upon the position of the nodes of the orbits of the planets; and the nodes having a motion, the plane of the ecliptic moves sometimes one way, and sometimes the other; thus vibrating, as it were, through a very small angle. Hence, the inclination of the ecliptic to the equator must vary with the variation of the ecliptic; and this variation is confined to narrow bounds. And, in like manner, each planet, in virtue of the attraction of the other planets, will be drawn out of the plane of its orbit, and made continually to change the plane in which it moves. Hence, the planes of the orbits of the planets are constantly changing. Combining therefore these changes of the orbits, with those described in the last article, we see what a number of variations the motions of the planets are subject to. And it might be supposed, that these variations would, in the course of time, so increase, as to endanger the permanency of the system. But this is not the case; for all the variations are governed by *fixed laws*, and of such a nature, that the forms of the orbits, and their situations, after certain periods of time, return to the same forms and situations, which they had at the

beginning of those periods. By this provision, the system can never run to ruin, it's own internal powers preventing it, by bringing all things back to the point from which they departed. This remarkable effect proceeds from the force of gravity varying in the inverse square of the distance, as explained in Art. 17. If the force had varied inversely as the cube of the distance, or in any inverse ratio higher than the cube, the planets would either have perpetually receded from the Sun, or continually approached, and at last have fallen into it. And under any other law of force than the inverse square, great disorders in the system would have taken place, and, in the course of time, have brought on it's destruction.

20. The variety of seasons arises from the axis of the Earth being inclined to the plane of it's orbit, as explained in Art. 8. This inclination is at present decreasing; and this arises from the change of the plane of the Earth's orbit (Art. 19.) Now if this inclination were continually to decrease, and the axis should at length become perpendicular to the orbit, there would then be no change of seasons. But against this we have an adequate provision; for such is the effect of the law of gravitation, that the inclination will afterwards increase, and return to it's former state; and

the whole variation is confined within a small compass, so that no sensible change in the seasons will take place. Thus the whole system is, as it were, renovated after a certain period, and no apprehensions need be entertained for it's safety.

21. The water in the ocean is observed, twice to rise and twice to fall in about $24\frac{3}{4}$ hours; and these risings and fallings are called *Tides*. This arises from the unequal attraction of the Sun and Moon upon the different parts of the Earth, the parts nearer to the Sun and Moon being attracted towards those bodies by a greater force than those parts which are more remote, according to the law of attraction explained in Art. 17. But as the Moon has a greater influence than the Sun, it is that body which principally regulates the tides, and therefore we shall first consider it's effect. And here we premise this circumstance: To remove a body further from the center of the Earth, is to raise it up. Now the waters on that side of the Earth next the Moon, being attracted towards the Moon, more than the center of the Earth is, will be drawn away from the center, and therefore the water will rise up on that side, making *flood* tide; and when at it's highest, it is called *high* tide. And the center of the Earth being more attracted to the Moon

than the parts which lie on the contrary side to that of the Moon, the center of the Earth will be drawn away from the waters lying on that side, and thus the distance of that side from the center being increased, it causes the water to rise up on that side, making there also a *flood* tide. It is therefore high tide on the opposite sides of the Earth at the same time. Now the waters being elevated at the opposite sides, the accession of waters to these parts must have flowed to them from the surrounding parts; and therefore, at the intermediate parts between the flood tides, there must be a depression of water, called the *ebb* tides, and which at the lowest are called *low* tides. As the Earth turns about her axis, and thereby continually brings the successive parts of it's surface under the Moon, the points of high and low tides must follow the Moon, as she appears daily to move about the Earth. Similar effects, but in a smaller degree, will be produced by the Sun. If we therefore consider the Sun when he is in conjunction with, or in opposition to, the Moon, that is, at new and full Moon, he will raise the tides at the same points where the Moon does; therefore at such times the tides will be the highest, and these are called *spring* tides. When the Moon is ninety degrees from the Sun, that is, at her first and

third quarters, the Sun tends to depress the waters at those parts where the Moon raises them, and therefore the tides are then the lowest; and these are called *neap* tides. The *highest* tides are therefore at *new* and *full* Moon; and the *lowest*, when the Moon is at her *first* and *third* quarters; or rather, at the distance of two or three days after, according to the situation of the different places, and the obstructions the waters may meet with in their motions.

22. Having thus explained the principal phænomena of the system, as more particularly requisite for our present purpose, we will now look a little beyond it, into the more remote parts of the universe.

23. The bodies situated without our system are called *Fixed Stars*; and though apparently luminous points, are undoubtedly bodies like our Sun, appearing so small from their immense distances. The number which we can at one time see with the naked eye, in a clear night, is about 1000. The bright tract in the heavens, called the *Milky Way*, when examined with good telescopes, appears an innumerable collection of stars. The stars are divided into different classes, according to their apparent magnitudes: the largest are called of the first magnitude; the next in size, of the second

magnitude; and so on, to the eighth magnitude, beyond which they are not classed. They are not very evenly scattered about the heavens, but principally disposed in clusters. With short telescopes, these clusters have the appearance of small white spots; but with larger telescopes, the stars become visible. Most of these clusters are globular in their form, and some of them so crowded with stars, that the central parts appear a blaze of fire, surrounded with innumerable brilliant points, forming an appearance beautiful beyond all description. Of these clusters Dr. HERSCHEL has observed between two and three thousand. *Phil. Trans.* 1786, 1789, 1802.

24. Many of the stars which appear single to the naked eye, appear double, treble, &c. when viewed through a good telescope; and this happens when two, three, or more stars are situated, as to appearance, very near together; though in respect to *distance*, they may be very far from each other.

25. Some of the fixed stars appear and disappear, by regular periods; others have a regular increase and decrease of brightness. These phænomena are accounted for, either by supposing that the stars may be partly opaque, and, by revolving about an axis, become invisible when the dark side is turned towards

us; or if not invisible, they may be greatly diminished in their brightness; or the phænomena may be solved, by supposing that these stars may have opaque bodies revolving about and very near them, which may either wholly, or in part, obscure them. Sometimes a new star appears; and others have disappeared, and never been seen again. CORNELIUS GEMMA discovered a new star on November 8, 1572; it exceeded *Sirius* in brightness, and was seen at mid-day. It first appeared bigger than Jupiter, but it gradually decayed, and after sixteen months it entirely disappeared. In October, 1604, KEPLER discovered a new star, so very brilliant, that it exceeded every fixed star, and even Jupiter, in magnitude. It was observed to be every moment changing into some of the colours of the rainbow, except when it was near the horizon, when it was generally white. It gradually diminished, and disappeared about October, 1605, when it came too near the Sun to be visible, and was never seen after. MONTANARI discovered two stars to be wanting, which had been marked by BAYER. M. CASSINI discovered fourteen new stars, three of which have disappeared. The star *Algol* varies in it's brightness; it's greatest lustre is that of the second magnitude, and least, that of

the fourth; and the period is about two days and twenty-one hours. See the *Phil. Trans.* 1783.

26. Many of the fixed stars are observed to change their places, and to have a proper motion of their own; and probably this may be the case with all of them. From the observations of Dr. HERSCHEL, there is also reason to conclude, that the Sun, and consequently the whole solar system, is in motion. The light of the Sun appears to be of the same nature as that of the fixed stars, for the laws of reflection and refraction are the same in both; also, the velocity of solar- and star-light is the same; for light is not instantaneous, but progressive. It comes from the Sun in about eight minutes and one eighth, and moves above eleven millions of miles in a minute. We conclude from hence, that the Sun and the fixed Stars are bodies of the same kind; and that the latter were made for the same purpose as the former.

27. Dr. HERSCHEL has discovered other phænomena in the heavens, which he calls *Nebulous Stars*; that is, stars surrounded by faint, luminous atmospheres, of considerable extent. There are others which he calls *Planetary Nebulæ*; these are round, whitish, well-defined bodies, which, by their appearance, he

concludes not to be clusters of stars. Some of them have a bright, central point (*Phil. Trans.* 1802.) But the most remarkable phenomenon, is that of a body in the form of an elliptical ring, well defined, of a considerable breadth, and at an immense distance. He has also discovered objects, whose distances he estimates to be so great, that their light must have been nearly two millions of years in travelling down to us. Thus far back therefore, at least, we may trace the age of the creation (*Phil. Trans.* 1802.) From *Sirius*, supposed to be the nearest of the fixed stars, the light cannot have been less than six years and a half in coming to us, it's distance being known to be not less than 37000000000000 miles from us; hence, the distance of those objects from which light has been nearly two millions of years in coming to the Earth, cannot be less than eleven millions of millions of millions of miles. And yet this probably comprehends but a small part of the universe.

28. Beyond the boundary of the creation, as marked by the discoveries of the best telescopes, we may expect a dark back-ground; and this appears to be the case, except certain whitish spots, which appear like openings into more distant regions. There are two of these near the south pole, called by sailors *Magelanic Clouds*.

There is also one in the middle of Orion's Sword, in which there appear seven stars. It is observed, that the figure of this spot is changeable, and therefore the appearance is not likely to arise from a collection of stars. Several others of considerable magnitude have also been discovered; but the most remarkable, is one which comprehends a space of sixty square degrees; and this is scattered over with a great many stars. That in Orion, as mentioned above, is included in this latter, and is seen distinctly from it, as appearing brighter. What can be the source of this partial and vast extensive light, it is impossible to conjecture. From the very extraordinary phænomena which we have here enumerated, it is probable that we may, as yet, be acquainted only with a very small part of the creation.

S E R M O N S,

&c. &c.

S E R M O N I.



Ps. XIV. 1.

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.

THE form of speech here made use of, seems to imply a fear of making an open confession of the disbelief of a God who made and governs the world; of opposing a generally acknowledged truth; and of violating the common principles and feelings of mankind. “Corrupt indeed must they first become, and abominable in their doings,” before they can be brought to the confession of a sentiment so degrading to man, as, at last, to place him upon a level with the beasts which perish. But Infidelity and Impiety are now grown bolder; and men are found, who not only openly deny a Providence, but even the very existence of a God; and boast of their belief, as though

they had made a discovery of the first importance to the good of society. “But what if some do not believe? Shall their unbelief make the works of God of no effect?” It may appear strange, that they who have been well acquainted with the system of the universe, should have professed opinions of this kind; but so it has been, and so it is. Contemplating the heavenly bodies, and considering them only in a physical point of view, as objects of matter and motion, they extended their enquiries no further; and “loving the praise of men more than the praise of God^a,” the pride of their discoveries confined them to the immediate subjects of their contemplations, and “they regarded them not as the works of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands.” Disputing with earnestness about the properties of an atom, they have been inattentive to its Creator. This might appear more extraordinary, if we did not daily see the most gross in-

^a “Though the pursuit of truth be an entertainment and employment suitable to our rational natures, and a duty to Him who is the fountain of all knowledge and truth; yet we must make frequent interruptions; else the study of science, *without a view to God and our duty*, and from a vain desire of applause, will get possession of our hearts, engross them wholly, and, by taking deeper root than the pursuit of vain amusements, become, in the end, a much more dangerous and obstinate evil than that.”

attention to truth as the object of pursuit, and absurdities maintained, which run contrary to the clearest evidence of our senses. The due weight which the testimony of human knowledge ought to have upon the mind, is sometimes unaccountably opposed by our prejudices and passions. Would it not be thought the height of folly and perverseness to express a doubt, whether the eye was made for seeing, and the ear for hearing? and yet it has been contended, that these are only accidental effects. Others, to be thought wiser than the rest of mankind, have denied the possibility of motion; perplexing the plainest matters of fact by metaphysical subtilities^b; and thus have they verified St. Paul's account of the Gentiles, that "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Happily, the evidence of sense

^b Thus, a body cannot move where it is, and it cannot move where it is not; therefore, it cannot move at all. This is a striking instance, how easy it is to perplex, by requiring an argumentative answer to a question which must be decided by the senses. If a man be required to solve a problem, he is not to have the principles laid down upon which he must reason, because they may not be competent for the solution. In examining the arguments used by Infidelity, this observation may be of some consequence. It is invariably the practice of Mr. Hume, upon religious subjects, to assume such principles and definitions as necessarily lead him to the conclusions which he wants to establish; instead of considering the question upon the proper evidence by which it's truth or falsehood may be established

here supplies the weakness of reason, and suffers it not to be lost in such speculations^c. Some have founded their opinion, not upon their understanding, but upon their inclination; and experience shows, that a strong inclination with a very slight degree of evidence, will be esteemed as demonstration. Because God is not an object of their senses; because they see effects which confound the weakness of their understandings, they at once deny the existence of a Supreme Being, trusting to the operation of accidental causes; as if effects, produced in a regular order, could be more rationally accounted for by chance, than by design. They talk of the course of things, and of the general and immutable laws of Nature, as if the laws themselves conducted the planets in their courses; perverting the use of terms to mislead the unwary; and rather than confess their ignorance, they banish God from the world. But to admit a thing to be done by chance, is not to exclude an agent, nor freedom of action; it is only an effect produced, without a previous direction. If

^c Mr. HUME says, "To explain the cause: of our *mental* actions, is impossible;" he might have said the same of *corporeal* operations; and this would have saved him the trouble of writing the greater part of his philosophy, which is employed in requiring proofs of first principles.

a ball be projected with a design to strike one body, and, instead thereof, it strikes another, we say the effect took place on the latter by chance, there having been no intention in the agent to produce such an effect; this is all we can understand by the word *chance*; when employed otherwise, it is a term without any meaning, and made use of, only to cover our ignorance^d. In all effects where you exclude intention, you necessarily exclude all rational inferences from them. It seems therefore a fair test, that events are not the effects of chance, when you can reason upon them, and deduce consequences which are always found to agree with the phænomena intended to be explained.

But Infidelity will say, that the universe may have existed under it's present circumstances from all eternity, as the only remaining pretence for the exclusion of a Supreme Cause, and to which Atheism may think no arguments can be opposed. If at present we saw nothing in the universe but what might *go on* without a cause, the hypothesis might be allowed to

^d It will not be denied that man acts upon foresight; but to grant that a machine can act by design, and contend that the machine itself is only a work of chance, is a position which nothing but the most shameful ignorance, or the most hardened infidelity, will dare to advance.

have some weight, though by no means such as to exclude God from the world. But when, from a continual *change* of motion in all the bodies of our system, we perceive a power constantly operating, we feel ourselves forced to acknowledge the existence of some *external* cause, without which, no change of motion could possibly take place. If we saw a body moving in a straight line, and continue to move on uniformly without the least interruption; and if it were asserted, that this body has so moved from all eternity, it might not be easy to prove the contrary, it being an axiom in philosophy, that a body will continue so to move, till some external cause acts upon it. But if we saw this body, instead of moving on uniformly in a straight line, continually deviate from it's rectilinear path, we should infer that there is a *power* external to the body, which, acting upon it, was the cause of this *deviation* of motion. And if we observed this deviation to be directed by a fixed law, we should conclude, that there was *design* connected with this power. And if we further perceived that this law was such, as would best preserve the system of bodies directed by it, from falling into ruin, we should finally determine, that to power and design, there was also joined *consummate wisdom*: that is,

in fact, we should conclude that there was a Supreme intelligent Director of all these bodies. To say that mere matter can thus direct matter, or to admit the power of directing in that which wants a director, would be indeed to make "the blind lead the blind." Absurd however as this must appear, some have attempted to solve the government of the system upon that ground; they have offered a solution, upon the very principle which requires explanation. Thus the same difficulty remains, and the same question returns. The giving of power to inanimate matter, is the strong hold of Atheism; it is the first step to exclude God from the world. I know no species of motion, the primary cause of which we can comprehend; and yet philosophers have had the presumption to attempt a solution of the mysteries of the creation, and the government of the world. But our ignorance should make us cautious, not presumptuous. There are many truths involving difficulties, which the human understanding is incapable of surmounting. It is not always necessary that we should see the principles upon which effects are produced, in order to be satisfied that they are not the result of accident. A man may not be able to explain the cause of the flux and reflux of the sea; and yet, from

the regularity of these effects, he must be convinced that they are not owing to any accidental circumstances. And on this ground, it is unreasonable to deny the existence of God, merely because we cannot comprehend his nature and mode of action^e; more especially, when we are surrounded with physical effects, the causes of which are altogether incomprehensible to our present limited faculties. If a man say that he must have mathematical demonstration, or he will not believe; that although he does not see how the system of the universe, in it's present circumstances, can be accounted for without the supposition of a Supreme intelligent Cause, yet possibly it may be solved without; in such a case, infidelity arises, not from want of evidence, but from a disposition of mind not well disposed to receive religious truths. A man who refuses the testimony of his senses, takes effectual care not to be confuted. Infidelity is more attentive to difficulties than to evidence; and that man will never believe, who has no disposition to be convinced. Nothing future can be certain; yet man can do very well with the degree of evidence which he has to act upon. If moral

^e We cannot comprehend how the motions of the body follow the direction of the will; yet the latter is admitted as the cause of the former.

certainty be here rejected, a man must be left “to live without God in the world.” And yet this is the great principle by which all our conduct in life is directed, and on which our most important and solemn acts are determined^f. A judge condemns a criminal to death, upon circumstantial evidence only, without any more fear of having acted wrong, than if he had been directed by absolute certainty. In matters of fact, except what falls immediately under the notice of our senses, the certainty can only be, what is called *moral*; but in many cases it is such, that we act upon it with the same confidence as if it were demonstrative, or that the matter of fact had fallen under our own observation. Where we cannot obtain mathematical proof, we may obtain evidence which shall have the same effect upon our practice; evidence producing conviction. Practical proof is what we want to establish; the business of life would soon be at an end, if we were to act only upon demonstration.

^f “The unsatisfactory nature of evidence with which we are obliged to take up in the daily course of life, is scarcely to be expressed: yet men do not throw away life, or disregard the interests of it, upon account of this doubtfulness. The evidence of religion then being admitted real, they who object against it as not satisfactory, *i. e.* as not being what they wish, plainly forget the very condition of their being; for satisfaction, in this sense, does not belong to man.” BUTLER’S *Analogy*, Part II.

In our search after truth, we must be directed by that kind of evidence which is applicable to the subject. Matters of fact must be proved by testimony. Theorems in philosophy, by axioms founded upon deductions derived from experiments. Mathematical propositions, by demonstration founded upon self-evident principles. The nature of an agent, as the cause, must be estimated from the effect. And it may be further observed, that we are not bound to answer mere difficulties, which, implying no contradiction, may subsist with truth; because, every thing short of demonstration, must be exposed to cavils. And in those subjects of investigation, which, from their very nature, admit not of demonstration, and which may not have been the objects of our senses, we must take reason and experience for our guide. We must consider what powers are necessary to produce such and such effects; we must be cautious not to assign inadequate causes; and in estimating whether events have arisen from chance or design, the laws of probability will frequently afford to the mind a powerful argument, upon which it may rest its determination; for when events continue to happen oftener than they ought, according to the laws of chance, there is a presumption in favour of design. In assigning a cause therefore to

account for any phenomenon, the degree of evidence must be estimated from the joint effect of these considerations in it's support. And, where several *independent* circumstances concur in defence of any position, the evidence will be increased in a very high degree; to speak mathematically, in the compound ratio of all the probabilities; and although it may not be possible to estimate this numerically, and thence to ascertain how near it approaches to certainty, yet such a consideration will tend very greatly to increase our confidence. In all our worldly concerns, we act upon probability; and in every other case, a reasonable man will, under the same degree of probability, act with the same degree of presumption. On a subject, therefore, involving the consideration of the existence of God, and on which must rest all our hopes of a better life, they who will not be guided by those received principles of reasoning which direct their actions in every other case, must be actuated by an incurable degree of pride, obstinacy, or ignorance. In every other case, our fears are apt to magnify the danger. If a man were one out of a thousand, of whom one by lot should be condemned to die, his fears would be apt to make him estimate the danger, very far beyond it's proper degree. Is it not therefore unaccountable, that

men should boldly arm themselves against the belief of the existence of a Deity, in which if they *should* be mistaken, they must bring upon themselves the displeasure of an all-powerful Being? They throw off all fear of God, under the momentous uncertainty of his existence and providence; and, whilst unconcerned at the evil which awaits them in the event of their error, they are terrified at the apprehension of another evil, comparatively of no signification. Such is the folly and weakness of Atheism. Under this degree of blindness, we can only recommend the advice which Gamaliel gave to the Jews: “Refrain, lest haply ye be found to fight against God.” That degree of evidence which quickens our endeavours to obtain a less good, ought surely to animate us in the pursuit of that which is greater. We ought to require the greater evidence in support of that side of the question, where a mistake would be the most dangerous. An attempt to prove the impossibility of the existence of those attributes which we ascribe to God, and thence to reject him, has never been ventured upon; all that Infidelity has contended for, is, that the proofs of his existence cannot be reduced to that degree of certainty which commands belief. But, if there be any truth in the mathematical laws of

probability, and the acknowledged principles of philosophy, the proof that the material world was not a work of chance, rises not only to the highest degree of moral certainty, but carries with it the evidence of demonstration.

In deducing the consequences which we shall attempt to establish, we reason from the effect to the cause; and here, as our premises are true, we may have confidence in our conclusions. But we sometimes fall into a fatal error, in endeavouring, first to establish the cause, and then to reason from it. It is greatly to be lamented, that some very able writers, under the confidence of mathematical demonstration, have left much, even for true philosophy to controvert; and of this, infidels have availed themselves; rejecting the truth of the positions, because proofs, attempted upon insufficient principles, have failed. An unskilful defence does great injury to the cause which it means to support. It is "the works which he does, that bear witness of him." "Whilst we have the light, let us walk in the light." The observations of a celebrated Nobleman, whose Letters have done no service to the morality of the present age, and who cannot be suspected of religious enthusiasm, are pertinent to our present enquiry: "I have," said he, "read some of SEED'S Sermons, and like them very

well; but I have neither read, nor intend to read, those which are meant to prove the existence of God, because it seems to me too great a disparagement of that reason which he has given us, to require any other proofs of his existence, than those which the whole and every part of the creation afford us. If I believe my own existence, I must believe his. It cannot be proved *a priori*, as some have idly attempted to do; and cannot be doubted of *a posteriori*."

In all cases, a man must proportion his belief to the evidence arising from the grounds before stated, and is laid under a moral obligation to a conformity of practice. It is an abuse of our understanding to believe that which has but a small degree of evidence in it's favour, and to make that belief a ground of action; and he who ventures more upon probability than can be justified from the circumstances of the case, acts irrationally and against evidence. In respect to the origin and government of the universe, on one hypothesis, it is granted that no difficulties remain; on the other, that no difficulties are solved. We see power and wisdom existing in rational beings, to a certain extent; increase these without limit, and you may form a being who can do every thing which is possible. There is no more difficulty

in conceiving a power which can move the earth, than a power which can move only a few pounds; nor is there any difficulty in conceiving unerring wisdom. Here is nothing but what may easily be admitted. And the credibility that there is a Being endued with such extensive powers, arises from the absolute necessity of supposing such an existence, in order to account for the works of the creation. And to remove, as far as we can, all difficulties under which the mind may in this respect labour, let us consider the faculties of man:—that he can discern distant objects, and discover many of their properties—that bodies at the distance of many millions of miles from him, are exposed to his observations—that, by means of glasses, he can inspect the heavenly bodies; discover mountains and volcanoes in one, spots and atmospheres in others; and that, beyond these bodies, he can perceive others, whose distances exceed the limits of the imagination. When, I say, we find that man can thus bring, as it were, home to himself, such a compass of the creation, it is very credible that there may be superior beings endued with such enlarged faculties, as to be capable of a more perfect comprehension of all such distant bodies, and of taking in an extent of view incomparably greater; and, by thus ascending

through the various degrees of beings till we arrive at God, we shall find no difficulty in admitting, that “all things may lie open to his view.” Thus may the attributes of the Deity, which, on account of the difficulty attending an adequate comprehension of them, have led many into infidelity, be shown to contain in themselves, nothing inconsistent with our own faculties; nothing but what we may admit, without being charged with an unreasonable degree of credulity. But ask an Atheist for the grounds of his belief, and he can produce no one principle on which it can rest, nor a single reason to bring the truth of his hypothesis within the very lowest degree of probability^g. Infidelity, perhaps, could not be more successfully attacked, than by a simple statement of the arguments upon which it is supported, leaving them to operate upon the common understanding of mankind. An eminent writer^h has given us the following creed

g “The hypothesis of the *Deist* reaches from the top to the bottom, both through the intellectual and material world, with a clear and distinct light every where; is genuine, comprehensive, satisfactory; has nothing forced; nothing confused; nothing precarious. Whereas the hypothesis of the *Atheist* is strained and broken; dark and uneasy to the mind; commonly precarious; often incongruous and irrational, and sometimes plainly ridiculous.”
BURNET'S *Theory of the Earth*, B. ii. c. 10.

^h TILLOTSON, in his Sermon against Atheism

of an Atheist. “ He believes that there is no God, nor possibly can be, and consequently the wise as well as the unwise of all ages, have been mistaken, except himself and a few more. He believes that all the world have been frightened with an apparition of their own fancy, or that they have most unnaturally conspired together to cozen themselves; or that this notion of a God is a trick of policy. He believes, either that the heavens and the earth, and all things in them, had no original cause of their being; or else, that they were made by chance, and happened, he knows not how, to be as they are; and that in this last shuffling of matter, all things have, by great good fortune, fallen out as happily and as regularly, as if the greatest wisdom had contrived them; but yet he is resolved to believe, that there was no wisdom in the contrivance. He believes that matter itself is utterly void of all sense, understanding, and liberty; but notwithstanding that, he is of opinion that the parts of matter may now and then happen to be so conveniently disposed, as to have all those qualities, and most dexterously to perform all those fine and free operations, which the ignorant ascribe to spirit. This is the sum of his belief, for which he does not pretend to offer any reasons; only he finds himself, he

knows not why nor wherefore, inclined to believe so, and laughs at those who do not."

The belief of a God is the foundation of all religion; for "he that cometh to God must believe that he is." This is the basis both of natural and revealed religion; the former is established upon the ordinary operations of nature, and the latter upon the extraordinary; and their agreement is no unimportant argument of their truth; for whatever we can discover concerning the nature and attributes of God, from the works of the creation, we may expect to find in his revelation. Natural religion leads us to conclude, that there is only one God; and revealed religion confirms this. Natural religion informs us that God is a Spirit; and so does revealed. Natural religion proclaims a God who created the world; and the Scriptures give us assurance of the same important truth: "God who made the world, and all things therein, he is Lord of all." Natural religion points out the benevolence of God to man; and revealed teaches us, that "he is loving unto every man, and that his mercy is over all his works." Natural religion leads us to infer, that there will be a life after this¹; and in Scripture we find our Saviour

¹ See Bishop PORTER'S three very excellent Sermons on this subject, vol. I.

giving the same assurance to his disciples: "I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord." Natural religion tells us, that God is everywhere present; and revealed, that we cannot fly from him. In the construction of the universe, the great scheme of Providence is like that of Christianity, various, extensive, and "contains some things hard to be understood." The operations of Providence in the natural as in the moral world, are sometimes obscure, and above our comprehension. We cannot trace the secret steps of either, nor see how all things tend to the perfection of the whole. Thus the two volumes of natural and revealed religion are found perfectly to correspond: the œconomy of one illustrates that of the other; "All these worketh that one and self-same Spirit." As revealed is founded upon natural religion, it is of great importance to establish the latter upon clear evidence. We must be first persuaded of this, as a fundamental principle, without which, all religion is vain. A person under the influence of natural religion, feeling it's imperfection, will be led to revealed, for the purpose of satisfying his doubts. The heavens above, and the earth beneath, proclaim their Creator's wisdom and power; but they do not tell us how far his mercy will be extended

to penitent sinners; and hence the necessity of a revelation.

The proof of a God, by deducing the cause from the effect, is grounded upon principles which are always open to our view. The works of the creation are standing evidences of the existence of a Supreme Being. The continued order of the physical world, is a sure testimony of a Divine Providence; and it is our intention, in the following Discourses, to trace the hand of God in the great operations of the universe; to show that “the heavens declare his glory;” and thence to silence the cavils of Infidelity; to satisfy those who are in doubt; and to confirm the faith of the believer. It is our duty to awaken those who disbelieve amidst the clearest evidence. When “the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not,” we must collect the rays to a focus, in order to give them effect. We must bring into one point of view, those marks of design which appear in the construction of the universe, that we may see God more clearly, through the medium of his works. Arguments of this kind produce conviction, which no sophistry can confound. “Every man may see it; man may behold it afar off.” In the great bodies which compose the system of the world, “there is,

indeed neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard; their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world." "It is a testimony which is sure, and giveth wisdom, even unto the simple." God speaks by his works, and his language appears to convey truth, because it is understood by all. Some marks of divine wisdom are so manifest, that they lie open to the common apprehensions of mankind; but in others, the designs lie far beyond our reach; by which proceeding, God both gratifies our understandings, and renders us sensible of our imperfections; and thus we are made to feel our proper rank in the scale of rational existence. "Let us therefore seek the Lord whilst he may be found;" for "in him we live, and move, and have our being." Even in the days of Pagan ignorance, "God left not himself without witnesses, in that he did good, and gave them rain from heaven, filling their hearts with food and gladness;" and if God have not left himself without witnesses, Infidelity must be left without excuse. And of the idolatrous Gentiles, St. Paul saith, that "they are inexcusable, because that which may be known of God, is manifest in them; for God hath shown it unto them. For the invisible things of him, from the creation of

the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." But although "the works of the Lord are great, they must be sought out by them that have pleasure therein." The wise man saith, "He will be found of them that tempt him not; and showeth himself unto such as do not distrust him." The understanding and the passions must act together, or no good effects can be expected to follow. Our Saviour says, "If any man will do the will of him that sent me, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God;" intimating thereby, that the mind must be in a proper disposition to receive divine truths, before evidence can produce conviction. The seed must be sown on good ground, or it will not produce good fruit. The want of a proper soil is the very root of Infidelity.

When error gets an early possession of the mind, it becomes, as it were, the voice of nature; and we feel ourselves but little disposed to examine with attention and impartiality, objections to any tenets which we have long received and maintained. Now in controverting the principles of those who deny the being or the providence of God, reason has to combat every obstacle which prejudice and prepossession can oppose to the reception of

truth. All these grounds of reasoning, by which we are accustomed to arrive at moral certainty, are rejected; and our adversaries will not submit to be directed by any of those principles which have been established, and generally received as fundamental truths; in consequence of which, conclusions are maintained against that degree of evidence, which in any other case would be considered as the effect of incurable ignorance or obstinacy. The laws of probability are altogether set aside; conjectures are opposed to evidence; hypotheses are formed, which include physical impossibilities; and effects of mechanical operations are assumed, which are in direct opposition to common experience. Objections are thus framed, and plain sense rejected, to support Infidelity. When opinions are assumed without examining evidence, the difficulty of refutation becomes increased, because no principles are employed against which you can contend. Reason will seldom bring a man to correct an opinion which he acquired without consulting it. Unbelievers, by refusing to acknowledge that rational evidence which God has given us for the regulation of our conduct, withdraw themselves from his presence, and then complain that they cannot see him. Under these unfavourable circumstances, our

hope must be, rather to save those from falling, whose minds are well-disposed to receive the truth, than to reclaim the Infidel. God has provided no remedy for a man's obstinacy. Speculative Atheism argues great ignorance; and practical, great folly.

Setting religion aside, examine the system of the world, merely upon the principles of reason, and philosophy. And here we judge of wisdom and power, by the plan and execution; and where excellency is found in each, we conclude it to be the effect of a wise and powerful agent. Now, what proofs of wisdom and council can be given, which are not found in the constitution and construction of the heavens? And Infidelity itself has granted, that "according to all the rules of just reasoning, every fact must pass for undisputed, when it is supported by all the arguments which it's nature admits of." Only unerring wisdom could see the consequences of the laws imposed upon the material world, and discern from the beginning, the progress and ultimate perfection. "Known unto God only, are all his works from the beginning." When we apply those principles of motion, which by experience we know to be true, to the motions of the heavenly bodies, the conclusions are

^k HUME'S Dialogues on Natural Religion.

always found to agree with the phenomena. In considering therefore the construction of the system, we are not allowed to depart from the established principles of reasoning upon matter and motion. No arbitrary hypotheses are to be admitted; no unknown qualities of matter are to be assumed. Let us not go back to that false philosophy, when unmeaning terms were used as a cloak for ignorance. If from the known properties of matter, and the laws of probability by which we judge concerning the coincidence of independent events, Atheism cannot explain the formation and preservation of the system, we are justified in rejecting the hypothesis. When Infidelity seeks protection on the grounds of natural philosophy, it must submit to be examined upon such principles. In the mechanical theories which have been invented to solve the appearances of nature, there is no connection of cause and effect, according to the established laws by which bodies act upon each other; and they have only exhibited the strongest marks of human folly and weakness. A man may as well attempt to solve a miracle mechanically, as, upon such principles, to account for the formation, or the government of the world. All regular administrations we ascribe to judgment. Only let us make these marks of wisdom and

design which are found in human production, the characters of wisdom and design in the works of the creation, and, from the acknowledgement of visible agents in the former case, we shall carry our conclusions to an invisible one in the latter. Let us therefore consider cause and effect, and give as fair a judgment upon the operations of nature, as upon those of art. Some ends require such a concurrence of co-operating causes, and such a series of operations, that it is impossible to account for them, but by a wise and powerful agent. Men are not asked to believe in a God, only because it is the most desirable scheme of the two, but because it is the most rational. "No man hath seen God at any time;" but our saviour informs us, that "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed;" intimating thereby, that every man ought to believe, where the evidence is good, although it may not be demonstrative. Were I asked a sign of God's existence, I would say, as the Lord said to Ahaz, "Ask it, either in the Depth, or in the Height above;" on the Earth, or in the Heavens. Contemplating therefore the system as the work of God, let us "set our affections on things above;" let us elevate our hopes in proportion to the enlargement of that knowledge which may be reserved for us.

If from extending our views by glasses, the mind receives such an accession of knowledge and pleasure, what may not be expected, when it shall be admitted to a nearer view of all the glorious bodies in the universe, and see them as they are.

S E R M O N I I .



Ps. XIX. 1.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work.

IF we take a survey of the creation, so vast in it's extent, and so wonderful in the number and magnitude of it's bodies; and contemplate the system which we inhabit, so admirable in the disposition of all it's parts, so regular in all it's motions, and so obedient to the nicest laws; it seems scarcely possible to exclude the belief of a Creator and Preserver. This is a truth that was acknowledged by philosophy, before a single law, by which the material world is governed, was discovered. The common views of nature, however imperfect and of small extent, suggest the idea of God; and accordingly we find, that the most uncultivated and barbarous nations have always worshipped

a Supreme Being, under some sort of form^a. The most superficial observations were sufficient to show, that an invisible hand directed the vast bodies in their motions, and brought them back to the points from which they departed; that the order which was observed in the system could not be the effect of blind chance, but of intelligence and wisdom. Serious reflections upon that little which the ancient philosophers had discovered, led them to the acknowledgement of a God. And if the narrow views they had of nature, conducted them to such conclusions, how much stronger must this argument become, when, by the discoveries of modern philosophy, the system is found to be governed by the wisest laws; that one principle pervades the whole, and produces that beautiful harmony of the parts, in all the different views in which they may be considered. If we stop at the effect, we cease to direct our enquiries to that end, to which all our researches into nature ought to tend. From the effect we must ascend to the cause; from the works of God, we must seek to know him^b. Let us not deny the existence of

^a The great error amongst the Heathens, was, not the denial of one God, but the belief of many.

^b Our Saviour himself refers to the works of nature for objects, in order to lead his hearers to reflect upon the power and wisdom of God: "Consider the lilies of the field."

a Supreme, intelligent Being, because he is not an object of our corporeal senses; “he has not left himself without witnesses.” His being and attributes are manifest from the constitution of the universe, and the ends for which it was formed; but the nature of his essence surpasses the conception of our limited faculties; “we see but in part.” Many things in the existence of God, have no analogy in man, and therefore must be beyond our comprehension^c. The laws of nature evince the existence and wisdom of a Supreme

^c If God were not incomprehensible, he would be no God; and yet he is rejected because he is so. Incomprehensibility is only in reference to human apprehension, and implies nothing contrary to the grounds of our belief. The human mind must admit the truth of many things which are above our comprehension. When a man denies a miracle, he must grant the existence of facts as hard to be explained. The difficulties therefore respecting the nature of God, cannot be admitted as an argument against his existence, because difficulties equally great must actually exist somewhere. A Christian, believing the word of God, believes that he created the world; an Infidel, not seeing how this can be accomplished, denies the creation, and believes in the eternity of the world. But is the latter more easy of comprehension than the former? He manifestly gains nothing by thus shifting the question. We believe in a Being who is incomprehensible. 1st, because “his works bear witness of him;” 2dly, because we have good authority to believe, that he has declared his nature to be so. Our inability to conceive the nature of God, ought to be a ground of our happiness; for what hopes could we have in a Being, circumscribed by the narrow views of man? Our expectations must rise in proportion to the greatness of the Being on whom our reward is to depend.

Director, in a much higher degree, than any effects, produced by man, carry evidence of design; inasmuch as the operations of the former are uniform, and subject to no variations or disorders which want correction; whereas, in the latter, we see continual alterations of plan, and deviations from preconceived rules. This permanent order of things was necessary, that experience might direct us in respect to our future operations. The laws of nature form an irresistible argument, that the world was the work of a wise and benevolent Being. The laws of nature are the laws of God's government; and how far soever we may be able to trace up a succession of causes, they must ultimately terminate in him. We see nothing in the heavens which argues imperfection: the whole creation is stamped with evident marks of unbounded power and consummate wisdom.

The *Motions* of the heavenly bodies afford the most obvious instance of *unlimited Power*, whether we consider it's exertion in the original production of these motions, or in controlling them. The utmost effort of human power is, to throw a pound-weight, a few yards. The Earth every day moves above a million and half of miles; and considering at the same time it's vast magnitude, without entering into

any calculations, it is evident that the power necessary to produce such a motion, exceeds the limits of the imagination. In Jupiter and Saturn, the requisite power is vastly greater. But great as the motions of these bodies are, we know that there is an invisible Power perpetually controlling them, turning them out of the rectilinear paths which they would have described in virtue of their projectile motions, into curves about the Sun. We neither see nor feel the power which is thus every moment employed; but from the effect produced, we are sure of it's existence; experience convincing us, that merely material bodies cannot have the direction of their motions altered, but by the action of some *external* cause. If we grant the Epicurean, that the accidental concurrence of atoms could have *formed* the vast bodies in the system, it could not provide a cause for the effect here stated. All that could be done in such a case, would be, to produce rectilinear motion in some one direction, and in which the body would persevere, without some new impulse. If it be said, that this continual change of motion may be produced, somehow or other, by the operation of mere matter, then it follows, that this directing matter must have a material director; and thus we may go on *in infinitum*; which is such an absurdity, that

it will not be thought necessary to waste our time in refuting it. The hypothesis of the Indian Philosopher, who supported the Earth upon an elephant, and the elephant upon a tortoise, is not more absurd. When we see matter operating with a contrivance which cannot result from it's nature, we must be convinced that Intelligence is concerned in producing the effect—that there must be an invisible hand to conduct it. When a man uses a combination of mechanical powers to produce any very extraordinary effects, we find that no increase of motion takes place; or, when motion is generated and continued by the action of bodies upon each other by impulse, it is found that we cannot produce an unlimited increase of motion and velocity. In the first efforts of power, therefore, to *produce* the motions of the heavenly bodies, and in the continual exertion of a power to *change* their motions, we can conceive nothing but the arm of Omnipotence; for it cannot have been originally the effect of a weak force, increased afterwards by any operations by which motion is continued. The existence of a power continually employed in producing a *change* of motion, renders credible the supposition, that the same power was employed in it's *original production*. A power which is constantly

acting, must have a permanent source; a source, whose energies are not weakened by time. We must therefore look for an agent, not in blind and inactive matter, but in him “whose arm is never shortened,” and “who never slumbereth nor sleepeth.”

But on these great bodies, there was also a motion impressed, which gave them a rotation about their axes. This necessarily produced a change in the figures of these bodies^d; which change is exactly what ought to take place from physical principles^e. This agreement

^d Introduction, Art. 6.

^e There is a circumstance in the *form* of the planets, which argues foresight in the preference of one out of two figures. With the *same time* of rotation, each body may put on *two different* forms; that is, there are two different spheroids which will preserve their equilibrium; one of them will be very near a sphere, and the other very distant from it (M. DE LA PLACE'S *Mécanique Céleste*, tom. II. livre iii. chap. 3.) In the case of our Earth, supposing it to have been originally an homogeneous body, whose parts would all freely yield to the centrifugal force, one of the spheroids would have the ratio of the polar to the equatorial diameter, as 229 to 230, which is very nearly the ratio that actually obtains; and the other, as 1 to 680. Now in all the planets, we find that form which is the nearer to the sphere; and which, in point of utility and convenience, is the more advantageous of the two. For the other form is nearly a flat circular body, having a convex edge; and under this figure, the tides would be subject to such variations as to deprive us of the advantages we at present enjoy from them. There would also be nearly half a year's day, and half a year's night to all the inhabitants, except those who live at or very near to the equator. These and various other inconveniences would result from this

between the actual figures of the bodies, and the figures which they would put on from rotation, teaches us to look here for the cause. But the solid parts of the Earth, in their present state, cannot have their form altered from the force arising from rotation. When the rotation therefore first took place, all the parts must have been in a state in which they would freely yield to that force. Admitting this solution, a state of chaos must have existed at the time when the rotation began; and that the Earth has been in some such a state, it's present constitution seems to evince. Our hypothesis therefore requiring these bodies to have existed in a state altogether different from their present, the hand of an all-powerful Being becomes necessary to have produced this great change. If it should be contended, that the solid parts of the Earth might by chance be formed as they are, and that the fluid parts might arise from a rotation which was accidentally given it, it may be answered, that this supposition

figure of the Earth. Of the two forms, that will be put on which is nearer to the form of the body before it's rotation took place. If it be said, that gravitation would at first produce a spherical body, and therefore the present forms of the planets are only such as necessarily arise from physical principles, it may be observed, that in this case we find a provision that these physical principles may produce the most beneficial effects. Under every consideration, the law of gravity appears adapted to produce the best ends.

implies a mathematical agreement between two *independent* and *accidental* circumstances, the forms of the solid and fluid parts, each of which might have been varied an indefinite number of ways; in favour of which concurrence, no man will venture to contend^f. It may be said, however, as the only remaining plea for Infidelity, that the bodies in the system may have existed from all eternity, in their present form and time of rotation. But here we have the same difficulty to contend with, as in the last case. For that there should be several self-existing bodies, under the same circumstances, is equally improbable, as that so many bodies should have been formed by chance, under the same circumstances, the

^f The figure of the solid parts must, upon this supposition, have been such as the fluid parts might put on by rotation; the solid parts must therefore accidentally have put on a regular figure; and this determines the axis of rotation. Now there can be but one time of rotation which can give the fluid parts that figure. But to produce this time of rotation about a given axis, a given force must act at a given point, and in a given direction; and to contend, that three such independent circumstances, each of which might have been varied an indefinite number of ways, should by accident have been adjusted, to produce a given time of rotation about a given axis, would be a degree of folly and weakness with which we would not wish to charge human nature. It is a circumstance also deserving our notice, that the quantity of water should be just sufficient to fill up the hollow of the solid parts of the earth; thereby making one regular figure of the fluid and solid parts together. This fact carries great marks of design.

independence of the bodies in the former supposition being just the same as in the latter; for the existence of self-existing bodies must necessarily have been totally independent of each other, and of any other body. Infidelity has therefore gained nothing by making this hypothesis. Hence, from every view of the circumstances under our present consideration, we are taught to look up to a wise and powerful Being, as the cause of all these nice adjustments; to Him, “in whose hands are all the corners of the earth.”

In the motions of the heavenly bodies therefore, we see the existence of power acting under different circumstances; a power originally impressed upon the bodies, and a power continually acting upon them, indicating an external cause; for no *internal* powers of a material body can give it motion, nor, when in motion, alter it's state. “Give me where to stand,” said ARCHIMEDES, “and I will move the Earth.” The Earth every moment receives a new impulse; where then shall we look for a footstool, but in some Being who exists independently of matter; but in Him, “who dwelleth not in temples made with hands;” “who maketh the clouds his chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind.” The government of the system requiring some

external controlling power, affords a perpetual memorial, a constant visible argument for the existence of a God. We must not deceive ourselves with talking about nature as a first principle. “Nature is a word without meaning, if considered in any other view than as a system of laws, by which God upholds the visible world, and produces the infinite variety of effects in it, according to an established and regular course of subordinate causes and means; and hence, when the mind terminates it’s views in a supposed nature, as a self-moving agent or principle, it robs God of the honour due to his majesty, and transfers it to an idol of it’s own making.”

The vast distances^s of the bodies which compose our system, forbid us to think that like circumstances could be found to exist amongst them all, without considering them as the work of one agent. Similarity of effects in bodies totally unconnected, and where the circumstances might have been varied an indefinite number of ways, affords a proof of design, which in no other case would be questioned. And here, the following circumstances present themselves for our consideration. All bodies have a tendency towards each other, and this tendency is regulated by a fixed law^h. All

^s Introduction, Art. 5.

^h Ibid. Art. 17.

the primary planets describe, about the Sun, curves of the same kindⁱ. They all respect the Sun as their center of motion^k. There is a fixed proportion between their mean distances from the Sun, and the times of their revolutions^l. All the like circumstances obtain in respect to the motion of the Satellites about their respective primaries. The general system, and the particular systems thus included in it, are all under the direction of the same laws. All the planets are opaque bodies, and the central body luminous, dispensing thereby to each body a greater uniformity of light and heat. Each body, so far as observations have been able to discover, revolves about an axis, and that axis is inclined to the plane of it's orbit; by which, provision is made for day and night, and also for a regular return of seasons^m. The phænomena of several of the planets, show that they have an atmosphere of the same nature as that of the Earth. All the planets move in the *same* direction. The periodic time of the Moon about the Earth, is exactly equal to the time of her rotation about her axisⁿ. Observations have also discovered, that the same circumstance takes place in all the Satellites of Jupiter, and in one, at least, of Saturn.

ⁱ Introduction, Art. 2. Note.

^k Ibid. Art. 2.

^l Ibid. Art. 5.

^m Ibid. Art. 8.

ⁿ Ibid.

Whether it be true of all the rest, observations have not yet been able to discover; but, from the analogy which is observed in the other parts of the system, we may suppose that the same circumstances exist in all the secondaries. Of the bodies which accompany each other in their motions about the Sun, we always find one very large in comparison with the rest, the former serving as a central body, about which the latter revolve; a circumstance which can hardly be imputed to chance, should you contend for the accidental formation of the bodies. And this is analogous to the case of the primary planets in respect to the Sun. Where we see such a uniformity of effect running through so extensive a system, and where there was room for so much variation, are we to admit causes operating without direction, understanding, and wisdom? We may leave it to the common sense and judgment of mankind to determine, whether all such effects be not the result of design, and prove not the unity of the agent. A man must have a strong bias on his understanding, who does not discover the footsteps of a superintending power in all this. "By the strength of my hand have I done it, saith the Lord; and by my wisdom; for I am prudent."

In extending the system to such vast bounds,

this important consequence is obtained, that the great bodies which compose it, are placed at such distances from each other, as not to produce, by their mutual attractions, any great deviations from their regular courses about the Sun. If they had been situated near together, considerable disorders would have arisen in the system, and its permanency might have been endangered. Under such circumstances also, the great bodies would produce tides upon each other of such magnitude, that, instead of being useful, they would become extremely injurious, rendering unattainable the conveniences which we now enjoy from them, granting their surfaces to be partly covered with water. It may however be here objected, that the great magnitude of the primary, will produce the inconveniency here stated, upon the secondary; but against this, a careful provision is made. The same face of the Moon is always opposed to the Earth; whatever therefore may be the elevation of the water upon the Moon, from the Earth's attraction, it so remains; hence, there is no flux and reflux of the water upon the Moon's surface°. And, from what has been

° Sir I. NEWTON computes the lunar tides to be ten times greater than those upon the Earth; and *that* diameter of the Moon which is directed to the Earth, to be 186 feet greater than that which is perpendicular to it, lying in a plane passing through the Earth.

already observed, the same cause probably operates to produce the same effect on all the other Satellites. Thus it appears, that no inconveniences may arise from tides upon any of the secondaries, from the great magnitude of their primaries. “Thou hast set them their bounds, which they shall not pass, neither return again to cover the earth.”

The equality between the respective times of rotation and revolution of each of the Satellites^P affords another instance of design, whether we consider the agreement as arising from a proper adjustment of the force and its direction to produce the rotation, or from a peculiar construction of these bodies, by which the action

If we therefore suppose a sphere inscribed in the Moon, there will be a redundancy of matter in that part which is opposed to the Earth. And our author considers, that the attraction of the Earth upon this redundant matter, will keep the body of the Moon always in the same position in respect to the Earth. Now, the figure of the Moon is not such as could arise from the principles of gravitation and centrifugal force, admitting the body at first to have been in a state of chaos. And if this had not been the case, the proper figure must originally have been given to the body, in order that the effect, here stated, might be produced. If we suppose a coincidence of the times without any such cause, it can never be considered as an accidental circumstance; for it would require an accurate adjustment of force and direction, to produce a time of rotation exactly equal to the time of revolution. Design therefore is manifest, in whatever point of view we consider the subject, there being a mathematical agreement between two independent effects.

^P Introduction, Art. 8.

of the primary upon the secondary may produce the same effect^a. In either case, the coincidence of the times to a mathematical degree of accuracy cannot be considered as the effect of accident. And, from the general tendency which we observe in all the operations of nature to some useful end, we may infer, that this adjustment is subservient to some great and important purposes.

In the Lunar system, there is another and very singular coincidence of effects, arising from causes so totally independent of each other, as entirely to exclude all credibility of a chance event. The nodes of the Moon's equator coincide with the nodes of the Moon's orbit, and both are in motion from different causes. The motion of the orbit arises from the action of the *Sun* upon the Moon, considered simply as a spherical body: the motion of the equator arises from the action of the *Earth* upon the Moon, considering the form and constitution of the Moon as *deviating* from *regularity*^r.

^a See note, p. 73.

^r In producing the effects here stated, we have the action of the *Sun* upon the Moon, the action of the *Earth* upon the Moon, and the *constitution* of the Moon's body. These three *independent* circumstances are adjusted to a mathematical accuracy, such, that the first produces the same effect upon the Moon to change the plane of her orbit, as the two latter produce upon the Moon to change the plane of her equator, the mean situation of the nodes

And is it not altogether incredible, that, of the indefinite number of deviations which might have taken place, that which is found to exist should *accidentally* be so nicely adjusted, that the effect, thence arising, should exactly agree with another effect, the cause of which has nothing to do with those deviations? The ends intended to be answered by this coincidence it may not be easy to assign; but, considered as physical effects only, design is manifest. Hence it is, that the Moon's axis keeps always the same position in respect to her orbit; a circumstance which is analogous to that of the primary planets, affording another instance of the unity of design in the works of the creation.

To encompass the Earth with a thin, transparent, elastic fluid, is a circumstance which cannot be considered as an accidental production. The Earth, as a body, could have existed without an atmosphere; but, without an atmosphere, it would have been useless as an habitation for Man, for it could have produced nothing. The atmosphere is just such a production as was requisite for the support of the vegetable and

of each always coinciding. When each of these circumstances might have been indefinitely varied, no one can contend that this very remarkable coincidence might be the effect of chance, without forfeiting all claim to attention. See LA PLACE'S *Mé. Gl.* tom. I. liv. V. ch. 2.

animal creation. It puts in motion the animal functions. It provides subsistence for the fruits of the Earth. It tempers the burning heat of the Sun. It illuminates the heavens by day, and renders all nature visible. It is the medium by which sounds and smells are conveyed, and without which, the corresponding organs of sense would have been useless. Had the atmosphere not been necessary for respiration, yet the very existence of all animals, in consequence of those wants which necessarily arise from their constitutions, would have required it. Before the creation of animals, it was necessary to provide for their existence; and that provision could not be a random one: it must be adapted to the constitution of their bodies, rendering effective their various organs. But to arrange and constitute a physical cause, which should at once be competent to produce all the various and requisite effects, was a problem to confound the wisdom of the wise. And here, in the simplicity of the means, we see the wisdom of the agent. A power, opposite in it's effects to that which binds the constituent parts of the Earth, was superinduced upon matter; repulsion was called into existence for the formation of a new medium, and the requisite provision was made. Hence, the vapours ascended to water the Earth. Respiration produced life. The

organs of speech and hearing became active and useful. And the eye became enabled to increase the objects of it's view, and to compress into narrow bounds the whole visible creation. It may also be observed, that every elastic fluid would not have answered all these important purposes. Some are very rare, and would not have been sufficient for the support of vapours; others are very noxious, of which, some produce instant death upon respiration. It is therefore a further indication of design, that such a fluid was constituted, as is found to answer all the purposes of life. Thus we perceive the atmosphere to be adapted to all those wants of the animal and vegetable creation, on which their very existence depends. "The works of the Lord are done in judgment from the beginning; and from the time he made them, he disposed the parts thereof."

It is a strong argument in favour of design, that the more accurately you inspect the works of the creation, the more nicely the parts appear to be adjusted to each other, and to be under the controul of fixed laws; as we may thence infer, that if our knowledge were perfect, we should discover nothing but perfection of workmanship. Had the universe been a work of chance, amongst all it's excellencies, some material imperfections must have been discovered;

for we never find consistency in the operations of accidental causes. Chance is more likely to destroy, than to build up. What St. Paul says of the natural body, that "it is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body," may be observed of the harmony of the creation, every part of which, considered by itself, appears to be perfect in it's kind, the whole forming a system, in which no imperfections can be discovered. Hence, we are led to acknowledge with the Prophet, the only one true God, who is the Director of all things; "I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God beside me; I form the light, and create darkness; I the Lord do all these things."

From the view which we have here taken of the system, we may conclude it to be the work of an all-wise and all-powerful Being, who is every-where present: truly therefore may it be said, that "in him we live, and move, and have our being." He who is thus intimately connected with us, may well be said "to be about our bed, and spieth out all our ways." "If I go up to heaven, thou art there; if I go down into hell, thou art there also: if I say, Peradventure darkness shall cover me, then shall my night be turned to day." Let us therefore "seek after that

wisdom which cometh from above," and study to secure the protection of that Being, from whom we can neither fly, nor conceal ourselves. Where Omnipotence worketh, there is no resistance; no weakness is found, against which we can contend, when the Almighty is the agent. From the works of the creation we conclude, that God is endued with power which no force can oppose, and foresight which nothing can over-reach. "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord."

Not to contemplate the works of God in the creation, is to rob him of a great share of the honour and glory, which is justly due to him. "One generation shall praise thy works unto another, that thy power, thy glory, and mightiness of thy kingdom, may be known unto men." It is our duty to make that exalted science, which is the subject of our present discourses, subservient to a higher purpose than that which is the immediate object of it's contemplation; we must make it "render unto the Lord, the honour due unto his name." Reason, as well as revelation, requires us to make this practical use of our knowledge. "When ye therefore glorify the Lord, exalt him as much as ye can, for even yet will he far exceed." When in Scripture, the Sun, the

Moon, the Stars, and all the inanimate part of the creation, are called upon to praise God, Man is made the instrument. Though void of understanding and reason, they offer means for the exercise of both; "they show the glory of his kingdom, and they talk of his power." Wherever we turn our eyes, we see nothing but what furnishes employment for the mind. All things which we behold in the creation, are so many "eye-witnesses and ministers" of a Supreme Being. "Heaven and Earth are full of the majesty of his glory." "Look unto the rainbow, and praise him that made it; very beautiful it is in the brightness thereof. It compasseth the heavens about with a glorious circle, and the hands of the Most High have bended it." When we behold God in his works, he necessarily becomes the first object of our contemplations; and however imperfect a knowledge we may thus be able to acquire of his attributes, we shall, at least, be made sensible of his goodness, and "of the wonders which he doeth for the children of men." Meditating on the works of the creation in reference to the Creator, is the best exercise of the mind, to prepare it for higher enjoyments. It elevates the dignity of the human species, to feel that it can take a survey of the universe, comprehend its arrangements, and arrive at

that knowledge of the works of the creation, which establishes so clearly the proof of a Creator. To reverence God as we ought, we must first be made sensible of his perfections ; and every improvement of that knowledge will increase our veneration. The more we feel our dependence upon God, the more we shall be disposed to place our confidence in him. A just sense of God's *physical* interposition in the universe, naturally tends to keep up an inward veneration and awe of that great Being ; and disposes the mind to receive whatever revelations he may be pleased to make for the regulation of our *moral* conduct. And to encourage our perseverance, he has connected the study of his works with temporal utility. We are informed, that "the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that would understand and seek after him ;" a plain indication of our duty to "set God always before us." He veils himself with a material world, as a medium through which we may see him ; for, at present, "we cannot see him face to face." When we first view a work of art, we admire the artist through his workmanship ; by further examination, we acquire a knowledge of it's construction ; hence, our admiration gradually declines, and at length it ceases. But, in

examining the works of God, as we can never find them out to perfection, so our admiration, increased at every new discovery, is continually rising, and our desires become eager for further gratifications. The object which we here contemplate, is not of a limited nature; it cannot be said of our enquiries, "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further." Between the wonders discovered by the telescope on the one hand, and the microscope on the other, ample room is given for investigating the works of the creation, without any fear that our industry should come to an end, through want of new matter for it's exercise; and accordingly we are informed, that "though a wise man seek to find out the works of God from the beginning to the end, yet shall he not be able to do it;" a concession, not intended to discourage our industry, but to quicken our activity. But, as "the wisdom of man is foolishness with God," we find, amidst all our discoveries, that nature presents us with wonders, which exceed all human ability to explain. Could we comprehend the whole of the creation, we should not be sensible of the infinite distance between us and our Creator; and consequently feel ourselves less inclined to "magnify the Lord our God, and fall low on

our knees before his footstool." Thus far we ought to be thankful for our ignorance^s. Understanding only the rudiments of the book of nature, we look with admiration on it's author; and, however imperfect our notions may be of the divine attributes, this we may reasonably conclude, that they who seek to know God, will be most favoured by him; and accordingly in Scripture, God is introduced as saying, "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known my name." EPICURUS enquired into the nature of thunder and lightning, that he might not fear them; and a knowledge of the attributes of God, is the only thing which can set a man free from the terrors of his power, by finding benevolence connected with it.

In the constitution of the material world, nothing is found anomalous. Uniformity of

^s "We doubt not but there are excellent reasons why man should not have access to the distant parts of the system, and must be content at present with a very imperfect knowledge of them. The duties incumbent upon him, as a member of society, might have suffered by too great an attention to them, or communication with them. Had he been indulged in a correspondence with the planets, he next would have desired to pry into the state of the fixed stars, and at length to comprehend infinite space." MACLAURIN'S *Account of NEWTON'S Phil. Dis.*

circumstances in independent effects, is observed through the system. And if God, who, in the greatness of his wisdom and power, has been pleased to preserve a consistency throughout the merely material parts of the creation, and where, perhaps, deviation might have been permitted without any inconveniency to the sensitive part, ought we not to conclude, that in the more important parts of his works, and to which all the others appear to be only subservient, he will not violate the same principle of action? He who gave to man the powers of discovering the *physical* operations of nature, directs him also in the discovery of the *moral* world. Reason therefore leads us to conclude, that in all his dispensations to man, he will not act by arbitrary rules, but by laws which his unerring wisdom may think proper to enact, and which his unbounded power can execute. In the *material* world, we see that every thing worketh together for it's good; for what were once judged to have been irregularities, are now proved to be under the control of *fixed* laws; and hence we conclude, that, under the same director, the same will be true in the *moral* world; and that all it's apparent disorders will finally conduce to the honour and glory of God. This consideration will teach us to look

forward to a future life, in which “the wisdom of God, now in a mystery, will be fully revealed;” and to conclude, that all things will tend to the good of them, who “seek the Lord whilst he may be found.”

S E R M O N I I I .



Ps. XIX. 1.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work.

IT is no disparagement of the wisdom of God, that a discovery of what he has done was designed for certain ends, unless such ends are unworthy of him. To reject final causes, because it is not consistent with the wisdom of the Creator that man should discover his intentions, is a position contradicted by experience, since a discovery of the great laws by which the system is governed, is nothing less than a discovery of God's determination how the material world should be directed. And all such general laws are arguments of final causes, the end answered by them being manifestly intended for the regulation of our conduct; for without general laws, man could act upon no degree of certainty; no future events could be predicted; nor would there be such a thing as a course of nature, to direct us how to act with

a prospect of success. ARISTOTLE thought the world to have been eternal; but finding that animals acted for ends, he was obliged to own a superior controlling power over them^a. Thus,

^a Man is the only animal who, having ends in view, reasons, deliberates, plans, and makes use of means accordingly. Brute animals are not thus directed in their operations. They do not act upon their judgement, with a view to the ends to be accomplished. When they use means, although the best possible for their immediate purpose, they know not that their ultimate tendency is for the most important ends. They always use the same means to obtain the same ends; a pretty clear proof that they are so constrained to act. Their works are as artificially done, as if they had been the result of long experience, assisted by the most profound reason. The work which man wants to accomplish, is brought to perfection by trials; but in respect to other animals, their operations are at first perfect in their kind; not made perfect by continued improvements. "The cells of bees, by being hexagonal, are the most capacious, in proportion to their surfaces, of any regular figures which leave no interstices between them, and at the same time admit of the most perfect bases. Thus, by following what is best in one respect, unforeseen advantages are often obtained; and what is most beneficial and regular, is also found to be most useful and excellent. By this construction, the *least* quantity of wax is requisite for containing the same quantity of honey. The form of their cells suggested a problem in maxima and minima, that had been overlooked by mathematicians, as such as had been thought to exceed the compass of common geometry*." It will not be contended, that the bees carry on a mathematical process of reasoning, and deduce those practical principles upon which they always work. Results arising from investigations in the higher species of geometry, are acted upon without the knowledge of a single axiom. Here the animal is directed by what we call *natural instinct*; and this natural instinct can be nothing but the impression of the Author of

of

* See Mr. Wallis's paper on this subject in the *Phil. Trans.* Vol. XLII

he denied a God in making the world, but was obliged to admit one to govern it. DES CARTES believed that the universe was the work of God, but denied his providence; and rejected final causes on the ground above stated, that it was arrogance in man to pretend to see the end of God's works; and, under this persuasion, when he scrupled not to deny that the eye was made for seeing, and the ear for hearing, he thought himself wise enough to understand the counsel of God in establishing the constitution of the world. Such has been the folly and inconsistency of those who have rejected God as the creator or governor of the universe. Neither Theism nor Atheism can subsist with final causes; the common sense of mankind has therefore been argued against, for the purpose of rejecting God and his providence. Infidelity has always been aware, that to deny final causes, tends greatly to weaken the best arguments for the belief of a God. Final causes necessarily pre-suppose an intelligent and wise agent; and hence, to avoid being drawn into such an acknowledgement, we see to what miserable expedients Infidelity is driven.

of nature upon it; directing it in what is proper to be done, and how it is to be accomplished; controlling it by a kind of necessity, which supersedes the use of reason and deliberation. Its actions cannot be otherwise accounted for. They afford a most satisfactory proof of the existence of a Supreme, directing Power.

The most sublime and important of all human discoveries, is the law of gravitation^b, as it enables the philosopher to solve all the phænomena in the system; and, by demonstrating the government of the world to be under the direction of a single law, it confirms the maxim, that “nature does nothing in vain;” or rather, that God brings about all events by the simplest means^c. To a mind uncorrupted by false philosophy, or not led astray by

^b Introduction, Art. 17.

^c It may be here asked, How do you know that so many and various ends are better obtained by the operation of a single cause, than by employing different means according to the operations which are to be effected? We must grant, that our conclusion in favour of one cause, as fittest upon the whole, is not demonstratively certain; and we must further confess, that a multitude of means could have been as easily established and conducted by the Deity, as a single cause which might produce the same effects. But although, in respect to God, it could make no difference, one way being as easy as the other to Omnipotence, yet, in respect to ourselves, we see wisdom and benevolence in the choice of the former: for, as our Creator has been pleased that we should make a discovery of him in his works, it might be in condescension to our weakness that he has chosen but a few causes, in order that “the invisible things of him in the creation may be more clearly seen;”—that we may the better trace the footsteps of divine workmanship, in the formation and government of the world. A multiplicity of causes might have been too much for our limited faculties clearly to comprehend, and to investigate how far they were all directed by fixed laws, so as to imply design; and, under such circumstances, the evidences of natural religion must in a great measure have been lost. There cannot be a greater instance of divine wisdom, than in thus pre-disposing circumstances to the accomplishment of such important ends.

a corruption of morals, a system governed by laws must bear undoubted marks of design; and when those laws are the best possible for it's preservation, it indicates consummate wisdom in the Supreme Director. Let us therefore consider the nature of the effects resulting from the laws by which the material world is governed, that we may judge of the wisdom of the lawgiver. As each body, to use the common language, acts upon or attracts all the rest^d, and all the planets revolve about the Sun, the motion which each would have, as arising simply from the Sun's attraction in conjunction with the projectile motion, is continually disturbed by the other bodies^e; and thence great disorders amongst them might be supposed to arise; and such as, in the course of time, might endanger the permanency of the system. But no disorders of this kind are produced. All the

^d When we say, that a body *A* acts upon, or attracts, a distant body *B*, all we mean is, that *B* has a tendency to move towards *A*, and would actually move up to it, unless some circumstances prevented it. But we do not suppose the *cause* of this tendency to reside in *A*, because a body cannot act where it is not. The effect indeed is the same as if *A* could draw *B* towards it; but as we must reject this supposition, we must suppose that *B* is impelled towards *A*; and upon this ground, philosophers have attempted to account for gravitation, seeking for *material* causes which will produce the effect; an attempt which has been attended with no success whatsoever.

^e Introduction, Art. 18, 19.

variations from that motion which they would have had in virtue of the Sun's action only, are governed by fixed laws; performing their regular periods in stated times; some of which are accomplished in a few days; others require some hundreds of years; at the ends of which, the bodies return to the situations from whence they departed, and are found in their orbits, just where they would have been, if no such disturbances had happened. The planes of the orbits of the planets are subject to a variation of situation; but, after certain periods, they return to the positions from whence they departed. The inclinations of their orbits to the ecliptic are also subject to a change; but this change is confined to small limits; and in a stated period, each orbit returns to that inclination from which it set off. The figure of the Earth's orbit is approaching towards that of a circle; but it will afterwards gradually recede from that figure, and return to its original form^f. The like circumstance takes place in the figures of the orbits of the other planets. It has been found by observation, that the

^f It is a very remarkable circumstance, that, amongst all the variations to which the orbits of the planets are subject, their major axes, and consequently the periodic time, and mean distances, should remain invariable. Hence, the lengths of the years are subject to no change; nor is the mean annual temperature sensibly altered.

mean motion of the Moon is increasing; but after a certain period it will decrease by the same steps and no apprehensions need be entertained for the stability of that part of the system. The obliquity of the ecliptic is diminishing; and hence it has been supposed, that seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, might hereafter cease; but it will afterwards increase, and return to it's former state^g; and the variation will be confined to such limits, that the seasons will never be sensibly affected by it. All the planets move in the *same*^h

^g Introduction, Art. 20.

^h Assuming the direction of the Sun's rotation, M. LAPLACE reckons that there are thirty-seven revolutions made in the *same* direction, called *direct*; that is, those of the seven primary planets in their orbits; of the eighteen secondaries in their orbits; of five primary planets about their axes; of six secondary about their axes, and the rotation of Saturn's Ring. And, considering these motions as the effect of chance, he computes the probability that one of these motions would have been *retrograde*, to be $\frac{137438953471}{137438953472}$, certainty being *unity*; and hence he very properly concludes against this arrangement being the effect of chance; it indicating, he says, a general cause which determines these motions. This cause he imputes to a fluid revolving about the Sun and planets, and giving these motions to the bodies; thus assigning only material operations, and reviving the old doctrine of vortices, the inadmissibility of which we have endeavoured to show in our *Observations on the Hypotheses, &c.* He has, however, been mistaken in assuming these motions to be all direct, as those of the satellites of the *Georgian* are retrograde. If we deduct these six satellites, and add the direct motions of the
three

direction in their orbits, and this is essential to the stability of the system; otherwise, the disturbances would not have had their regular periods of increase and decrease, as at present, but the irregularities, by increasing, would have brought on it's destruction. Hence, we find no confusion of motion, which, under any other law of gravitation, would have taken place; nothing anomalous; no constant increase of irregularity, by which, in the course of time, the system might be destroyed. There is a *mean* situation, about which the system oscillates through very small spaces; hence, every thing returns to that state from which it departed, and thus the whole is preserved from falling into ruin. "Thou hast set them their bounds, which they shall not pass." Now of the indefinite number of laws by which gravitation might have been directed, it argues even a demonstrative proof of design and unerring

three very lately-discovered primary planets which he omitted, we shall then have thirty-four revolutions in the same direction; and the probability that one of these, as chance productions, would have been *retrograde*, is $\frac{17179869183}{17179869184}$. If the Reader will consult M. LAPLACE'S *Exposition du Systême du Monde*, liv. V. chap. 6. he will there see his conjectures respecting the formation of the system; exhibiting a melancholy instance of human weakness in a man, whose powers of mind have enabled him to make those discoveries in the physical operations of nature, which might have been thought beyond the reach of all calculation.

wisdom, that *that* particular law, by which the harmony and permanency of the system can alone be preserved, should obtain. The system must have been formed by one, who intuitively saw all its perfections. Those truths which man arrives at by patient and laborious investigations, with God is intuitive knowledge. This is not a case, as in human operations, where the work could be begun in imperfection, and completed by trials, inasmuch as some of the effects can exist only in their present state of perfection. Neither are these matters, which you may say are not likely to have happened by chance; but still 'tis possible they *might* so happen: they are facts which could not possibly have been the result of accident, the nature of the phænomena not admitting of such a solution. Laws of action cannot be made by chance; and the mathematical agreement of independent effects, is demonstration of designⁱ. It may be also

ⁱ There are an infinite number of chances against this concurrence of circumstances, considered as an accidental effect; that is, there are an infinite number of ways in which the agreement might *not* happen, compared with that in which it might. In such a case, you can express the evidence in favour of design, by nothing less than *certainty*. If an indefinite number of needles were dropped upon a hard, polished plane, would a man commit himself upon the most trifling event possible, upon the ground that they would all rest upon their points? And yet they who
 contend

further observed, that mere possibility carries no degree of evidence with it, because it operates equally both ways; for, as a principle, it may be contended, that a thing *is*, because it *may be*; and *is not*, because it *may not be*. Possibility, when admitted, only gives admission for investigation; but, of itself, it affords no ground even for forming a conjecture. And yet, if we examine the foundation of Atheism, it will appear to rest merely upon an assumed possibility, in opposition to the clearest deductions from the evidence of experience in favour of natural religion, and the force of testimony in defence of revealed^j.

In the systems of the secondary planets, we discover still more complicated motions, which necessarily require a further adjustment of circumstances to produce them. All the satellites of Saturn, and of Jupiter, except one, describe circles about their respective primaries^k. Here,

contend that the material world was a work of chance, act no less irrationally, than a man who would so commit himself.

^j In all such cases, a reasonable man will act, not on mere possibility, but on that side where the higher degree of probability lies, as less likely to lead him into error.

^k If it should be contended, that the orbits may be ellipses differing very little from circles, the force of the argument in favour of design will be but little weakened; for, on that supposition, both direction and velocity must be confined to limits extremely small; and that two such independent circumstances
should

both direction and velocity must be adjusted to mathematical accuracy; whilst the velocity itself is under the regulation of two independent circumstances^l. Also, each must have had a further velocity communicated to it, equal to, and in the same direction with, that which the primary has about the Sun, in order that they might go on together. Whether the secondaries were formed at the same time with the primaries, or afterwards, makes no difference; they must have been formed *in* their orbits, and received their projectile motions, under all the above-mentioned adjustments^m; for they could not, by coming accidentally into the power of the primary, have had their motions converted into their present orbits. This fact alone, places the bodies under circumstances out of the reach of all fortuitous causes.

should be found to have taken place in ten bodies, cannot be contended for on the ground of accidental effects.

^l The distance of the satellite from the primary, and the quantity of matter in the latter.

^m According to the law of gravitation, a revolving body must return to the place from which it was projected. All the bodies in the system, therefore, the cometary as well as the planetary, must have been *formed* and *begun* their motions *in* their orbits. The primary and it's secondary could not therefore have come accidentally near each other, and continued their motions together, as now regulated. The formation of the satellite, and the adjustment of it's motion, must have been cotemporary; effects which are out of the power of all accidental causes; and which alone prove, that the system could not have been a work of chance.

No man can contemplate this part of the system, and take a view of the nice and various adjustments which must have taken place, without being forced to acknowledge, that “the hand of the Lord hath done this.”

There is another description of bodies, called Cometsⁿ, of which, the system contains not less than three or four hundred. They describe about the Sun, orbits of the same species as those of the planets, but differing considerably in their form from that of a circle; in consequence of which, the Sun is situated very far out of the center; so that in one part of their orbits they approach very near the Sun, and in another, they recede to a great distance from it. The orbits are also found to lie in all positions. And as the *form* and *disposition* of their orbits differ from those of the planets, so are the *nature* of the bodies different; thus far constituting a distinct part of the system: but still their motions are governed by the same laws. The form and situation of their orbits appear to have been designed, that the system might contain the greatest possible number of bodies, without producing confusion of motion; for in those parts of the different orbits which lie near together, the bodies make but a very short stay, spending most of their time in

ⁿ Introduction, Art. 4

remote regions, at vast distances from each other, and from all the planets. Thus, what at first sight might have the appearance of irregularity and confusion, is found to be a wise disposition to prevent disorder. In the *figure* and *arrangements* of the orbits, we discover evident marks of provision and design. “In wisdom hast thou made them all.”

In assigning the cause of gravitation from material operations, we are not allowed to make hypotheses, unless supported by acknowledged principles. The doctrine of gross vortices will not explain the phenomena; nor will the subtile fluid of Sir I. NEWTON°. All attempts to assign material causes have failed; and had they succeeded, they would only have removed the difficulty to another object, not have taken it away. When men attempt to explain the constitution of the world, they only

° Sir I. NEWTON says, it is inconceivable that inanimate brute matter should, without the mediation of something else which is *not material*, operate upon and affect other matter, without mutual contact; as it must do, if gravitation, in the sense of EPICURUS, be essential and inherent in matter. He maintains, that gravity must be caused by an *agent*, acting constantly, and according to fixed laws; but whether this agent be *material* or *immaterial*, he will not determine. (*Letters to Dr. BENTLEY.*)—Upon this subject, see a tract, entitled, *Observations on the Hypotheses which have been assumed to account for the Cause of Gravitation from Mechanical Principles*, by the Author of these DISCOURSES.

tell you how they themselves would have formed it; not how it is formed. Unless the planets move in spaces void of resistance, the system could not have existed for an eternity of ages^p, without some independent power

^p Upon supposition that the earth has existed from all eternity, it must, before this time, have overflowed with inhabitants, unless we suppose that they have been occasionally taken off by a deluge, leaving a few, to people the earth again. In this case, there must have been an infinite number of deluges, whatever time may be requisite to fill the earth with inhabitants. But it is impossible that all these could have happened from natural causes; for upon this principle, the effect is thus explained: The water is contained in the earth, and covered with a crust; the crust breaks in, and the water overflows the surface. But by a natural operation of this kind, how can we provide for an infinite number of deluges? After the falling in of one crust, how could a similar effect have happened? Or, (to give all possible advantage to this hypothesis) if you suppose only part of the crust to have fallen in at a time, there could then have been but a small number of deluges; and hence, the present state of things cannot be accounted for. Or, we may consider the matter thus: If there had been an infinite number of deluges, destroying at each time nearly all the inhabitants, in some of them it is more than probable that all mankind must have been swept away; for the evidence is not assignably less than that of demonstration, that an event which is very likely to happen at every trial, must happen in an infinite number of trials. But if it should be said, that after the earth was peopled, mankind might no longer increase in number, and therefore, upon supposition that the earth has existed from all eternity, one deluge might be sufficient to account for the present state of things, it may be answered, that when the number of mankind is increasing, they must, under the same state of their constitution, continue to increase without limit, unless some great change in their nature should take place; an effect which would require
a sup-

occasionally reforming it: and if void of resistance⁹, then there can be nothing material to act upon the bodies, and their continual deviation from a rectilinear course must be the result of some cause independent of matter. If all space were full of matter, two bodies at a distance might act upon each other, by means of the intermediate bodies; as by stirring water in one part of a pond, you disturb all the rest. But how the present motions of the planets could be continued under these circumstances, is wholly inexplicable: for in this case, it would require a much greater degree of power, and more complex laws, to produce and control all the motions, than when the bodies were independent, and free to move in all directions.

a superior controlling power. Upon supposition, therefore, that the earth has existed from all eternity, it seems impossible, from natural causes only, to account for the circumstances under which it is now found to exist: here we must admit the hand of a Supreme Being. And if the earth had a beginning, it must have had a Creator; for it will not, I think, at this time be contended, that the earth, it's productions, and all the race of animals, arose into being from the accidental concourse of atoms. In whatever point of view, therefore, we take a survey of the earth, we are led to conclude, that it could not have been the production of chance. And it may be further observed, that we have the concurring testimony, both of written history, and the universal tradition of the most ancient nations, in favour of the Mosaic account of the creation and deluge.

⁹ M. LAPLACE has proved, that the planets move in spaces void of all sensible resistance. Where then are we to look for material causes to produce gravitation?

A system of this kind calls more loudly for an independent directing hand, than that which was rejected to make room for it. In controlling the motions of the planets, therefore, we see effects, of which no cause can be assigned, unless you admit the existence of an agent independent of matter^r. The Saviour of mankind has assured us, that "God is a Spirit."

When it is said that two bodies attract each other, we only mean to express the effect; the cause is another consideration. "The fool who says in his heart, There is no God," will not venture to profess, that there is intelligence in a clod of earth, or that it has any internal active powers. The inaetivity of matter has placed it in the lowest rank of the creation. A body at rest will never put itself in motion; and yet mere matter has been brought forward, to perform all the great operations of the

^r Whether, or to what extent, the Deity may act in physical operations by subordinate agents, are questions, for whose solutions we have no principles upon which to reason; nor are there any appearances in the natural world, which lead us to form even a conjecture. The Scripture, indeed, speaks of superior Beings as ministers of God; but it seems to relate, more to agency in the moral, than in physical matters. It however strengthens the hypothesis, that there may be agents in the latter, as well as in the former case. And if we consider the influence of the will over the body, that the latter moves at the command of the former, it may further tend to render admissible the operation of spiritual Beings upon the great bodies of the universe, in producing and controlling their motions.

universe. It is one thing to consider matter as endued with a power of acting, and another, to regard it only as acted upon; the former leads to Atheism, the latter to the proof of a God. If every particle of matter were active and intelligent, there must have been a general agreement of all the matter in the system, to follow one and the same law. But when was there a council of this kind? If a man will consult his own understanding and experience, he must be convinced, that in the matter which composes the bodies of the system, there is no principle of activity, nor of intelligence; a very unfit agent therefore, for producing that beautiful harmony, which pervades the creation. In short, when we cease to consider the system as dependent upon an external active cause, and offer explanations upon mechanical principles, we fall back into the old exploded notions of philosophy; what we attempt to explain, we render unintelligible, and think ourselves safe from detection, because nobody can understand us. No one ever attempted to explain the formation and government of the system, upon acknowledged mechanical principles. A body sets out in unbounded space, and, after moving thousands of millions of miles under the direction of a certain law, and in a regular curve, returns to the place from which it set out,

in a certain fixed time. This is more than a blind man could do, setting out upon a plain. A man must see his way, in order to get back to the same place; and even then, his motion would not be in any regular path, nor in any stated time. In the former case, therefore, surely we are ascribing too much to mere matter. Effects without adequate causes, become effects without a cause^s. Our adversaries

^s Mr. HUME labours to prove, that you can give no *intuitive* or *demonstrative* proof, that effects arise from *operative* causes. You certainly can give no proof of first principles. If a man put a spring between two of his fingers, would you ask him to *demonstrate* that it tends to separate them? When the truth of a principle which does not admit of an argumentative proof, is disputed, the consequences which may be deduced from it will frequently tend to settle the question. Now if effects arise without efficient causes, they arise without direction, and every operation becomes the effect of what is usually called chance; for you cannot separate a directing from an operative cause. But that all effects are not the result of chance, I trust we have sufficiently proved. We therefore conclude that the author's position is not true.

He denies an *active* power in what are called causes, because you cannot *perceive* it's exertion; but says, "It is absurd to deny an *efficacious* power in the Deity." *Treatise on Hum. Nat.* p. 282. And can you in the latter instance perceive it's exertion? Afterwards, however, he contradicts the latter position; for he says, "The efficacy or energy of causes is neither placed in the causes themselves, *nor in the Deity*, nor in the concurrence of those two principles, but belongs entirely to the soul, which considers the union of two or more objects in all past instances." *Ibid.* p. 291. This he banishes all efficient causes from the universe, and leaves no directing power anywhere.

give a power to matter, called Gravity, that is, they substitute the effect for the cause, and

In the question before us, Mr. H. confesses, that “ he examines the inference from the relation, before he explains the relation; which order would not have been excusable, had it been possible to have proceeded in a different method. But the nature of the relation depends so much upon the inference, that we have been obliged to advance in this seemingly preposterous manner, and *make use of terms before we were able to define them, or fix their meaning.*” Ibid. p. 297. Are we then to admit false reasoning, because a man tells you he can give nothing better? but he says, “ We shall now correct *the fault*, by giving a precise definition of cause and effect.” How a definition, which asserts no truth, is to correct any preceding reasoning, I do not understand. In thus making use of a definition to correct false reasoning, Mr. H. must, if any thing can be allowed, reason in a circle.

From his doctrine of cause and effect, he draws this conclusion: “ Thought and motion are different from each other; and by experience we find that they are constantly united; which entering into the idea of cause and effect, we may *certainly* conclude, that motion *may* be, and *certainly is*, the cause of thought and perception.” Ibid. p. 131.

Whoever reads Mr. Hume with attention, will perceive, that almost all the leading principles in his philosophical works, tend to Atheism. And this is strongly supported by the declaration he makes in his *Essay on Miracles*, that “ miracles may be rendered credible, *except* where they are made the foundation of Religion.” Thus far he endeavours to exclude all revelation; and yet his own principle, the opposition of universal experience, destroys the credibility just as much in one case as in the other. But he goes further; for speaking of the miracles said to have been wrought in France, he says, “ What have we to oppose to such a cloud of witnesses, but the *absolute impossibility*, or *miraculous nature* of the events which they relate.” Now he defines a miracle to be “ a violation of the law of nature;” but as this implies no contradiction, it can imply no impossibility; by making a miracle therefore

then think that the whole business is very satisfactorily accounted for; and it must be confessed, that this is a very short way of settling it. Because they cannot comprehend the manner of God's acting, they are resolved to believe that he does not act. And because things proceed in a regular order, they exclude a Deity; the very reason why they ought to admit one. To give as a reason, that things have always been as they now are, is only to confess our ignorance. Atheism offers such violence to all the faculties and powers of the understanding, and to the common experience of mankind, that it becomes altogether unaccountable, how it could have gotten possession of the mind. But Infidelity arises, not so much from a darkness of understanding, as from a state of mind not well disposed to receive "the witness of God." It will not submit to that evidence which it cannot controvert. Under the present views which philosophy gives us of the

therefore impossible, the inference must be, that he denies the existence of an All-powerful Being, making the impossibility to arise from limited power. And yet he contends that "there may *possibly* be miracles of such a kind, as to admit of proof from human testimony." How these his positions are to be reconciled, I cannot understand. If he admit testimony in opposition to universal experience, he destroys the foundation of all his philosophy, by placing it upon a fallacious principle. But we must not expect consistency in a writer, who assumes his principles according to the conclusions he wants to establish.

existence of God, we must not consider ourselves in that state of ignorance, described by the Apostle, in which "God winked at the errors of his people." In natural as in revealed religion, "we have now no cloak for our sin." They who contend that every thing happened by chance^t, must admit this inexplicable paradox, that the operations were conducted to

^t "How long might a man sprinkle oil and colours upon canvas, with a careless hand, before this would produce the picture of a man? and is man easier made than his picture?" (TILLOTSON.) Will it be contended that human operations are more complex than the construction of the Solar system? If the formation of an ordinary machine require an agent, shall a more intricate one require none? Both reason and experience assure us, that the more a work departs from simplicity, the less probable it is to have been the effect of chance. When, therefore, Mr. HUME asserts, that we cannot say whether the system of the universe arose from thought and art like the human, because "worlds have never been formed under our eyes," endeavouring, by changing the question, to render doubtful the existence of a Deity, the difficulty is of his own creating, and he becomes guilty of a very gross misrepresentation; for the question is, Whether it arose from chance or design? Now in any operation, *design* has respect to the *plan*; and there is manifestly as regular a plan in the construction of our system, as in that of a house; we therefore infer design with the same certainty in the former case, as in the latter. Similarity of circumstances has nothing to do in this case; we do not infer design in one case from design in the other, but conclude in favour of them both, from the *same principle*. As a philosopher, Mr. H. disgraces himself by his sophistry; and as a man, by his want of honesty. All indirect attacks argue great perversion of mind, as it proves that a man is not acting upon conviction. He wants to convince *you*, of what *he himself* is not convinced. In the present instance, it is a lamentable instance of human weakness, folly, and impiety.

make as perfect a work, as if it had been the effect of a wise agent. Granting a Creator and Director of the universe, it could not contain more evident marks of design; hence, to ask for more is folly; and not to be satisfied with this, shows a perverseness of disposition which admits of no cure. No man acting upon the same degree of evidence, was ever deceived; upon what grounds then can we justify any suspicion in the case before us? If experience is to be our guide, (a principle contended for in all cases by Infidelity,) it proves every thing which we want to establish. There may be indisputable evidence of truth, without demonstration. Human nature is formed to act upon moral certainty; if not, reason would oftener perplex than assist us. And, accordingly, we find in Scripture, that faith is commended as founded upon plain and clear evidence; as inducing us to act upon rational conviction, where demonstrative proofs cannot be obtained.

We must be sensible how defective are all our enquiries in natural religion, without a knowledge of the constitution of the system. The Epicurean philosophers denied the effect of a divine power in the construction of the heavens, because, as they imagined, a considerable part of the Earth was rendered uninhabitable by the great heat of the torrid

zone, and the cold of the frigid. Others, to account for what appeared to them irregularities, had recourse to epicycles to explain the phenomena; and it was such considerations as these, which occasioned King ALPHONSUS, a celebrated astronomer, impiously to say, that if he had been with the Creator when he formed the world, he could have taught him better. Absurd hypotheses were invented to solve the phenomena of nature, and then they complained of it's Author, or rejected Him. Thus has Infidelity been founded on the most shameful ignorance and presumption. But when the existence of God is attacked, it only tends to place him in a stronger point of view; like storms and tempests in the natural world, which leave the face of heaven more splendid and serene.

If we reflect upon that intellect by which Man is able to extend his views through the creation, and discover the admirable harmony of all it's parts—that, by the powers of the mind, those wonderful discoveries should have been made in the construction of the system, and all the nice laws, by which it is adjusted and preserved, should be unfolded, and those divine truths discovered, which, at first sight, appear beyond the reach of all human ability to explain—that that foresight by which Man

is able to provide for futurity, and draw consequences, by which he is taught to act his part with so much advantage to himself here;—to contend that all this is produced by the mere operation of matter and motion, can arise, only from a vain pride of singularity, a corruption of manners, or from a confusion of mind, perplexing itself with metaphysical subtilities. The mind can find no resting-place, till it arrives at that Being, whose existence is independent of the material universe. Without this, we have no compass to guide us. When a man rejects God from the world, he looks beneath himself for his own origin. And to the presumptuous, they who profess to be in the secret councils of God, and would explain all the hidden mysteries of the creation, we recommend the conduct of one, who had a deep insight into nature: “I shall be very well contented, if I can but understand the nature of things as they now are; never troubling myself about their beginning, nor how they were made; knowing these things to be out of the reach of human knowledge, or even conjecture.” True philosophy neither asks, how the world came into existence^u, nor

^u Mr. HUME (*Dial. on Nat. Relig.*) observes, that “there are four principles, *Reason, Instinct, Generation, Vegetation*, which are similar to each other, and are the causes of similar effects.

what will be it's consummation. It is satisfied, if it can but discover it to be the work of a wise and benevolent Being.

Contemplating the system therefore, under all the circumstances which we have here stated, it must naturally present itself to an unbiassed mind, as the work of an intelligent Being. No laborious disquisitions are here necessary. The regular returns of day and night, summer and winter, proclaim, in a lan-

Any of these four principles (and a hundred others which lie open to our conjecture) may afford us a theory, by which to judge of the origin of the world; and it is a palpable and egregious partiality, to confine our view entirely to that principle by which our own minds operate." He examines the bodies in respect to their *origin* and *formation*, as it gave him an opportunity to exercise his ingenuity in proposing difficulties; and thence draws this conclusion, "that we have just as much reason to suppose that 'the principle of order,' as he calls it, or that principle by which all the operations in the material world are carried on, may as well be conceived to exist in matter, as in a divine mind." This is directly to call into doubt the existence of God, according to every idea which we entertain of that Being. If Mr. Hume really believed in God, as a Being distinct from the material world, he became in duty bound, not to leave his existence under such a degree of doubt; but to have produced arguments upon principles more competent to establish it; for he must have known, that the great argument from the works of the creation, in proof of a God, is founded on a consideration of the *laws* by which the material world is governed, in which his "principle of order" could not operate, and the *nice adjustment of circumstances*. If upon that ground the argument was undefensible, why did he not confute it? If it was defensible, why did he not support it? These questions we shall leave his disciples to answer.

guage understood by all nations, the wisdom of a directing power : But to confound Infidelity, it becomes necessary to extend our enquiries into the more hidden parts of the creation. It has been confessed, even by the Epicureans, that a view of the heavens has always furnished the most popular arguments for the existence of a God, and that the notion of a Supreme Being first arose from a contemplation of the heavenly bodies. What the Lord said to Isaiah, respecting the evidence of revealed religion, we may apply in our present enquiry : “ What more could I have done for my vineyard, that I have not done to it.” But in natural as in revealed religion, some are found “ who love darkness rather than light ;” and this also is their condemnation, that “ light is come into the world ;” for the modern discoveries in the constitution of the system, which so loudly proclaim a Deity, are not “ cunningly-devised fables.”

Under the influence of false philosophy, EPICURUS boasted that “ he would deliver the world from the fear of a God :” and the principle of all Atheism is the same ; that is, to set a man free from the slavery of religious superstition, as it is contemptuously called, and thence to release him from every principle of obligation. Then, whatever is, is right.

Where there is no lawgiver, there is no law ; and where there is no law, there is no transgression. Look into the morals inculcated by modern Infidelity, and you will see principles maintained and acted upon, which shock the common feelings of mankind, and which decency, in some cases, would forbid us to describe. Either there is a God, or there is not ; the thing is already fixed, and cannot be altered. This is a serious consideration ; it is not a firebrand, which a man may cast about, and say, “ Am I not in sport*?” It cannot be a matter of indifference to any man, whether there be, or be not, “ a God who judgeth the earth.” A good man wishes for it ; a bad man dreads it. The former consults the volumes of the creation, as they lie open to his view, as a sure guide by which he may infer the existence of a Deity, as the foundation of all religion. There he sees nothing but harmony ; every thing perfect in it’s kind ; nothing which harbours imperfection, but all

* Against scoffing at religion, TILLOTSON uses this unanswerable argument. “ No man ever pretended to demonstrate that there is no God, nor a future life. Supposing it therefore to be doubtful, whether there be a God, or not ; and supposing the arguments on both sides to be equal, yet the *danger* is not so. On the one side, there is *none at all* ; but it is *infinite* on the other.” This consideration should be the ground of our conduct. If a man cannot do away all doubts respecting the truths of religion, he may, at least, act upon it’s precepts without danger.

things working together for the good of the whole. There he observes ends produced by the wisest and simplest methods; the surest marks of design and wisdom. He is not "a God who hideth himself." We cannot open our eyes without conviction of some powerful Being, who is the author of the great choir of heaven and earth; and by further examination, we are taught to answer, to a considerable extent, the question put to Job; "Can'st thou, by searching, find out the Almighty to perfection?" inasmuch as *Philosophy* has taught us, that the works of the creation are perfect. To this science we are indebted for the loudest declarations of the power, wisdom, and goodness of the divine Architect, in the fabric of the world. It is the interpreter of the works of the creation. It is the ladder which reaches from earth to heaven. It is the school, in which a man is taught the profound wisdom and unbounded power of God. And here we may vindicate our application in the cultivation of the depths of science, and "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, who disdainfully speak against us;" as it has been altogether owing to such researches, that the system has been found to be perfect, that it contains no seeds of it's own dissolution; and hence the works of God are

vindicated from those supposed imperfections, which led men to deny his existence. Let the clamours of Ignorance, therefore, be heard no more^y. It was observed by him, who first taught mankind to establish his principles of natural knowledge upon experience and observation, that “all natural enquiries succeed the best, when a physical principle is made to terminate in a mathematical operation.” And if we consider what science has done in about the last hundred years, in the discovery of the great physical laws of nature, and thereby opening new views of the wisdom and goodness of God, we shall be encouraged to cultivate a further knowledge, upon a well-grounded expectation that we may arrive at further manifestations of his attributes. Every instance of wisdom which we discover in the works of the creation, is a hymn of praise to the Creator. It is in the vast effects which we see produced through the unbounded extent of the creation, that we discover those attributes of the Deity, which no other circumstances could suggest, his omnipotence and ubiquity. In cases where the Almighty has not placed

^y We may further remark, that the very depth of science is conducive to our *temporal* interests. It is to the profound investigations of philosophy, that we are able, with so much certainty, to traverse the ocean, and navigate our ships into port.

bounds to our researches, it may be criminal not to persevere. Here is no "forbidden fruit." The mysteries of nature are gradually unfolded. As yet, we may be only upon the threshold. Under these circumstances, let us consider, that further discoveries in science may lead us to new views of God in the creation. These are researches in which a good man delights. The confidence in a God, who hath taken such care, even of the material world, that nothing is left imperfect; that, so far as he sees, all things around him were made for his enjoyment; will fill his mind with trust, that he who formed and gave him powers of understanding, capable of making such important discoveries in the works of the creation, as to pronounce them all to "be very good," will, in the end, distinguish him by some signal mark of his favour. To him, the belief of a God is his highest enjoyment—that there is a glorious Being who ruleth over all; who taketh care of those who live soberly and righteously in this world; who guideth them here by his counsel, and who will afterwards receive them into glory. But the corrupt; they who "are become abominable in their doings," whilst they retain God in their thoughts, must fear his displeasure. Hence, they take pains to stifle the voice of nature.

Thus their minds become relaxed, and their practice depraved; they become gradually alienated more and more from God; the impressions of his existence, which at first had been so lively, gradually become more feeble; difficulties (and difficulties there must be, when God is the subject of our contemplations) present themselves, which they cannot solve; a gradual corruption of manners keeps pace with a corruption of religious principle; and at length they are induced to say, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Religion is never cast off till it becomes troublesome, and then a man's morality is shaped according to his inclinations.

To contemplate the works of God here, is probably but the beginning of that employment which may be reserved for our further gratification hereafter; and we may then be enabled to see the use of those things, of which we are now ignorant; "seeing, as yet, only through a glass darkly;" of things, which are too intricate for us at present to discover, or too remote for our views. The knowledge of Man is suited, more to satisfy his wants and teach him his duty, than to gratify his curiosity. God does not, nor perhaps, in our present state of existence, can he, fully reveal himself. Our Saviour informed his disciples,

that "he had yet many things to say unto them, but that they could not then bear them." And thus it appears to be in the natural world; "we see but in part;" but we see enough to convince us of this great truth, that "the earth is the Lord's, and all that therein is; the round world, and they that dwell therein." Engaged in speculations which give birth to the most sublime conceptions of God, the mind becomes better prepared for an humble submission to all the dispensations of his providence. The daily benefits which he bestows upon us, show, that we are not overlooked in the immensity of his works. All things which we behold, are but so many varied proofs of the goodness of God. Surrounded with every thing which is "good for food; pleasant to the eye;" and endued with the requisite powers "to make one wise," we conclude, that God intended our happiness. Take a survey of the globe which we inhabit, and say, if God have been sparing of his bounty; if "the earth be not full of his riches;" if it be not "covered with the goodness of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas." And according to this his character, we find that "he maketh the Sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust;" a circumstance which can only consist with overflowing goodness.

Inferring therefore, from the predominant appearance of the works of the creation, the intention and ends designed by it's Author, we conclude, that "the Lord is loving unto every man," and that "his mercy is over all his works."

S E R M O N I V .



Ps. XIX. 1.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work.

THE arguments for the existence and attributes of God from the works of the creation, are not to be set aside because the reasons of all his proceedings do not appear. Our belief is founded upon positive evidence; the difficulties which sometimes present themselves, arise from the imperfection of our faculties; and the force of a difficulty, as an argument against the credibility of a fact, is greatly weakened, when you can assign the cause of our ignorance, since it offers a reason why it cannot be understood. But if a sceptic can raise doubts, his ends are, in a great measure, answered. A celebrated writer, in his “Dialogues on Natural Religion,” laments that he can find nothing but doubts and difficulties,

when the Deity becomes the object of his contemplations^a; verifying the observation of

^a That you may not expect much certainty in Natural Theology, the author begins, by degrading human reason and human nature. "Let us," says he, "become thoroughly sensible of the weakness, blindness, and narrow limits of human reason." But if we consider what very extraordinary discoveries have, by human reason, been made in science; that it hath established principles which have unfolded all the great laws by which the material world is governed, and thus opened very extensive views of the constitution of the universe; with what truth, we may ask, could our author call it "weak," "blind," "of narrow limits?" Are all the great and important discoveries of NEWTON, the effects of a "weak" and "blind reason?" Again, "let us consider its uncertainty and endless contrarieties, even in common life and practice." It generally directs a man right upon these occasions. Further, "let the errors and deceits of our very senses be set before us." They very seldom deceive us, generally representing things as they are. They, indeed, represent the Sun as revolving daily about the Earth, instead of representing the Earth's rotation; and such like things: but these do not in the least affect our practice, nor are they errors of any consequence in a moral or religious point of view. Again, "the insuperable difficulties which attend first principles in *all* systems:" in science they are all clear, except you chuse to doubt, with our author, whether two straight lines may not cut each other in more than one point. If we admit this position of Mr. HUME, there can be no such a thing as certainty in any branch of science or knowledge. Lastly, "the contradictions which adhere to the very ideas of matter; cause and effect; extension; time; space; motion; and, in a word, quantity of all kinds, the object of the only science that can plainly pretend to any certainty or evidence." I know of no contradictions which exist in any of these circumstances. What contradictions are there in the principles of geometry? for that branch of science is included in our author's enumeration. When a man talks in this random way, he can be entitled to no attention.

SOLOMON, that "a scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not." He indeed pretends to acknowledge, that the question can never be concerning the *being*, but only the *nature* of the Deity; but the manifest tendency of the work is to exclude God from the world; that is, to show that there is no Being distinct from the material world itself. For when a man makes every possible supposition, and advances all the arguments he is able, to account for the origin of the universe from merely material causes, he does his utmost to render doubtful the existence of God; for demonstration is here out of the question. And in order to weaken the argument *a posteriori*, he endeavours to turn it into ridicule, by making absurd hypotheses respecting the *origin* and *formation* of the bodies which constitute the system, considering them in that point of view only, as best suiting his purpose. He sees no reason why the planets may not be mere machines; or vegetables; or animals; he cannot undertake attention. He deals in bold and general assertions, in order to obtain credit, and secure himself against any attacks. This is not the conduct of a man, whose object is the discovery of truth. Upon the ground which the author has chosen, you may admit all his difficulties, without the least affecting the arguments for the existence of a God, from a view of the system of the universe. When even an *Apologist* for a man's life and writings will not venture to defend his principles, it is fair to conclude that they are not defensible. See the *Appendix*.

to say which. “Many worlds may have been botched and bungled, throughout an eternity, ere this system was struck out: much labour lost: many fruitless trials made: and a slow but continued improvement carried on during infinite ages, in the art of world-making.” Again, “this world, for ought he knows, is very faulty and imperfect, compared to a superior standard, and was only the first rude essay of some infant Deity, who afterwards abandoned it, ashamed of his lame performance: it is the work only of some dependent, inferior Deity; and is the object of derision to his superiors: it is the production of old age and dotage^b in some superannuated Deity; and ever since his death, has run on at adventures, from the first impulse and active force which it received from him.” Further, “the world plainly resembles more an animal or a vegetable, than it does a watch or a knitting-loom; the cause, therefore, of the world, we may infer to be something similar or analogous to generation or vegetation.” Thus, random hypotheses, to ridicule and render suspected the belief of a God, are ventured upon, deserving our notice, only to show their weakness and

^b Rather so, the author's hypothesis.

absurdity^c. If the foregoing instances do not prove this, take the following: “A comet is the seed of a world; and after it has been fully ripened, by passing from sun to sun, and from star to star, it is at last tossed into the unformed elements which everywhere surround the universe, and immediately sprouts up a new system.” The author thus entertains his readers with the different views under which we may suppose the bodies to have been formed; and then, too cautious to draw any conclusion himself, would have the reader infer, that there is no Being distinct from the bodies themselves. But true philosophy never enters into vain speculations of this nature; it is employed in discovering God from the *constitution* and *government* of the world, here it can reach the object of it’s researches. These principles

^c We must call in question, that man’s understanding or his honesty, who, in support of his opinions, professes to doubt whether two straight lines may not cut each other in more than one point, because there were never two mathematical straight lines formed which we could apply to each other, in order to determine the matter by experience; who pretends to make a difficulty in understanding what is meant by one line being equal to, greater, or less than another; and who has the weakness to make this confession: “When two straight lines approach at the rate of one inch in twenty leagues, I perceive no absurdity in asserting, that upon their concurrence they become oae.” *Treatise on Human Nature*, B. i. sect. 4.

furnish a proof of the existence of a Supreme, independent Being, which operates upon the mind with the force of demonstration; but this evidence the author carefully conceals; artfully amusing his readers with his various schemes of world-making, and puzzling them with his metaphysical subtilities, till he thinks the business is completed. He talks of God as if he believed in him^d; and under an apparent concern for his honour, he advances principles which directly tend to destroy all credibility of his existence. But the grounds upon which he has chosen to make the attack, manifestly incompetent to settle the question; the weakness of his arguments, and the obscurity^e in which he generally involves them, show how little can be said in defence of Infidelity, on the principles of fair reasoning.

^d “With regard to religion, Mr. HUME seems to be desirous of playing a double part; of appearing to some readers as if he *reverenced*, and to others as if he *ridiculed* it. He seems sensible of the *political* necessity of religion in every state; but at the same time he would everywhere insinuate, that it owes its authority to no higher origin. Thus he weakens its influence while he contends for its utility; and vainly hopes, that while *Freethinkers* shall applaud his *scepticism*, *real believers* will reverence him for his *zeal*.” *Pref. to GOLDSMITH’S Hist. of Eng.*

^e We may here, with great propriety, apply Mr. HUME’S own observation: “A man who hides himself, confesses as evidently the superiority of his enemy, as another who fairly delivers up his arms.” *Treat. on Hum. Nat.* p. 84.

Having already considered the system in respect to the laws by which it is governed, we come to the consideration of a singular phænomenon surrounding the planet Saturn, in the form of a thin, flat ring, detached and at a considerable distance from his body^f. It was formerly considered as one ring; but modern observations have discovered that there are two, lying one within the other, and exactly in the same plane. And here, the first question which presents itself, is, how could these rings have been *formed*? According to the Epicurean, or any other hypothesis, an accidental formation must have been a *gradual* one. But if you admit gravitation and a gradual formation, it follows to a demonstration, that, during the formation of the rings, there must have been some external power supporting them; for, in their unfinished state, they could not have been sustained^g. Besides, gravitation alone could

^f Introduction, Art. 13.

^g We may observe of the rings, what we before observed of the satellites, that they must have been formed *in* their position about the planet; for had they been formed *out* of that position, they never could, by the laws of gravity, have acquired their present permanent situation. If therefore the laws by which the system is governed, could not have permitted the rings, granting them to have been formed at a distance from the planet, to be brought up to and accompany it; if the same laws will prevent the gradual formation of such bodies; and if an instantaneous
accidental

not have produced bodies of that figure. In short, give existence to matter; give it gravitation; give it motion; give it whatever powers you please, and you may defy Infidelity to give any account how the rings could possibly have been formed. Material agency is here altogether out of the question. Another circumstance to be considered, is, the rotation of the rings. To produce this, the force applied must act *in* the plane of the rings; but a single force acting thus, would have disturbed their position, and carried them up to the planet. Here must have been impressed equal and opposite forces, at equal distances on each side of the center, in order to give them rotation without altering their position. Such a complication of adjustments carries evidence of design, which no sophistry can weaken. It has been also discovered by observation, that the rings are not of a regular figure. Now it has been lately shown by a celebrated mathematician, that these rings are retained in their situations, by their rotations in conjunction with their gravitation; that if their figures had been regular,

accidental production, we know not how, nor by what powers, with the adjustments of position and rotation, and of velocity and direction corresponding to those which the planet has in its orbit, be a supposition which no one will dare to contend for; where shall we look for an adequate cause, but in Him "who is mighty in strength and wisdom?"

they could not have preserved their positions, but must have fallen upon the planet; and that it is altogether owing to these irregularities that they are supported in their proper situations^h. In the other bodies, regularity of figure tends to prevent any irregularity of motion, which might otherwise arise; but here, irregularity becomes necessary for the preservation of this part of the system, and, accordingly, irregularity is found to exist. And is it not a very striking instance of unerring wisdom, to have departed from regularity in that particular case where it became necessary? What ignorance might have deemed a defect, science (to it's honour) has demonstrated to be perfection itself. A further instance of adjustment is, that of the indefinite number of situations in which the rings might have been placed, their planes should exactly coincide with the equator of Saturn; a position which can never be disturbed by the action of the planet. It was also necessary that the rings should be carried along with the planet. This required a corresponding adjustment of velocity

^h “ J'ajoute que ces inégalités sont nécessaires pour maintenir l'anneau en équilibre autour de Saturne; car s'il étoit parfaitement semblable dans toutes ses parties, son équilibre seroit troublé par la force la plus légère, telle que l'attraction d'une comète ou d'un satellite, et l'anneau finiroit par se précipiter sur la surface de Saturne.” LAPLACE, *Méc. Cel.* liv. iii. ch. 9.

and direction, and these are independent effects; they might, or they might not have existed, after the formation of the rings; and they might have been indefinitely varied: we find them, however, accurately adjusted to the requisite circumstances. If we therefore consider the powers necessary for the formation of the rings, with the various and nice adjustments of velocities and forces, requisite to render their situations permanent, it puts to silence all arguments for a chance-production¹; and directs us to look for the cause in Him, “who spake and they were made; who commanded and they were created.”

This planet has also seven satellites; and the planes of the orbits of six, lie exactly in the plane of the rings. This must have been their original situation; for if their planes had not at first been coincident with that of the rings,

¹ We have here three bodies, Saturn and his two Rings; the Rings of a form which could not have arisen from the gravitation of their parts. They are concentric; placed exactly in the same plane, and in the plane of Saturn's equator. Their progressive velocities are adjusted to the velocity of Saturn in his orbit, to a mathematical degree of accuracy, both in respect to quantity and direction; and they have a certain degree of irregularity in their figures, which, with a corresponding period of revolution about the planet, is the means of securing them in their position about Saturn. To contend, under all these circumstances, that the whole was a work of chance, must arise from a disorder of mind which, it is feared, admits of no cure.

they never could, by the laws of gravitation, have been brought into that position. And as there are an indefinite number of situations in which each of them might originally have been fixed, would chance have placed six of them exactly in the same plane, and also in the plane of the rings? That one should be placed out of that plane, cannot affect the argument here stated in favour of design, because that circumstance does not at all influence the situations of the rest. And perhaps it may not be difficult to assign a reason, why one, at least, might have it's orbit so situated, as, thereby, the polar regions of Saturn are better furnished with light in the night. Without, however, enquiring into the cause, the coincidence of so many independent circumstances is a very satisfactory proof of design. If it be objected, that different situations of the orbits might have answered as well, and therefore it is no argument of design that they are placed as they are, it may be answered, that we are here speaking of design, considered in a physical point of view, and not in reference to any end for which the bodies might be formed, and on that ground our argument is not affected by the objection. Had all the satellites been placed out of the plane of the rings, the former might sensibly have disturbed the position of the latter, and

perhaps endangered the permanency of their situation.

If we consider the utility of the Sun, as a source of light and heat, we must be led to conclude, that it's formation and arrangement were not the effects of accident. It is the only body of it's kind in the system, and is placed in the best possible situation to give light and heat to the other bodies which compose it ; and as these amount in number to three or four hundred, if their formation had been a work of chance, how did it happen, that all the matter proper for the composition of a luminous and hot body, should meet and form one body only, and the other matter to form all the rest ? and to form that one body of such a mass, as to be a center about which the others must revolve, according to the laws of gravitation ? Had this, like the planets, been a revolving body, there would have been no regular return of seasons. It must also, in such a case, have been comparatively very small, and therefore totally inadequate for supplying the system with a proper quantity of light and heat. The laws of probability are so far against the formation of only one such body, considered as an accidental production ; and also, that this body should be the best possibly situated ; that when we further consider the conjunction of these

two independent circumstances, it would be a violation of every principle upon which we are accustomed to form a judgment, to consider it as the work of chance. To provide a fountain of light and heat, and to distribute those qualities to the utmost boundary of the system, with the various degrees of strength which are necessary for the different bodies that compose it, are circumstances which bear evident marks of adaptation, and which required consummate wisdom and unbounded power in the execution. The inconceivably great velocity of light^k is a very essential property, in order to prevent intervals of darkness. One such body, and so situated, is sufficient for all the purposes of the system; and accordingly we find but one. When perfect wisdom could have done no more, to perfect wisdom we must ascribe the operation. If we consider, that this body gives life to the system; that, by its heat, vapours are raised and rains descend to support the vegetable creation; and by its light, the inhabitants of the earth are enabled to fulfil all their various duties; we must see the necessity of providing a regular supply of both: and finding that such a provision is actually made, we are led to confess, that “it is thou, O God, who visitest the earth and blestest it; who

^k Introduction, Art. 26.

waterest her furrows ; who blessest the increase of it ; and who crownest the year with thy goodness." When God said, " Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of the earth ; and tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, to you it shall be for meat," we see the wonderful provision which he made for all future generations. But provision thus far only, would have been very defective, the fruits of the ground requiring a supply, both of light and heat ; and, accordingly, we find that such a provision was made. But something further was necessary. The *mean* heat of the Sun, continued uniformly, would not have been sufficient to bring to maturity the fruits of the earth ; to this end, a regular succession of heat and cold becomes necessary, and accordingly we find, that " thou hast made summer and winter." In the spring, the heat of the Sun increases gradually, producing that gradual increase in the growth of all vegetables, which is necessary to give them strength : and the summer-heats having brought the fruits to perfection, the Sun returns to the other hemisphere, and there performs the same office. Thus, one Sun is made to serve for every climate, and administers to the necessities of all the earth. Every different region has it's

vegetation suited to that degree of heat which is necessary to bring it's fruits to perfection; an adaptation which cannot be considered as the result of accident. But there is another remarkable circumstance in the constitution of the Sun. Light and heat are two distinct qualities. Now, both are necessary for the system; and accordingly we find the fountain of them both, in the same body; in that body which is best situated for promoting the ends of each. But did *chance* bring these two to meet, and to meet in the best possible situation? There is no necessary connection between them, as they are found to exist separately; and yet we find them connected in one body, and that body placed, just where design would have placed it, for the use of the system. Atheism would have us believe, that chance made some very lucky hits, just at the creation; for we have never heard of any such afterwards. "The Sun which giveth light, looketh upon all things, and the work thereof is full of the glory of the Lord."

In thus considering the different parts of the system by themselves, we are led to conclude, that in each, there are such indisputable marks of design, as to establish our belief upon the most rational grounds, that the whole was the work of an intelligent, wise, and all-powerful Being.

But the evidence is greatly increased, if we consider the harmony which reigns through the whole;—that “the whole body is fitly joined together.” When so many independent circumstances co-operate to one end, the laws of chance alone forbid us to assign any cause, but that of foresight and direction. Truly may it be said, that “God has made all things by number, weight, and measure;” a language which implies perfection of workmanship. The system is not like a house built upon the sand; the storm may come, the flood may arise and beat upon it, but it shall not be moved. “All things continue this day, according to thine ordinance.”

There is no opinion which has been so universally received, as that of the existence of a God. Every observation upon which that belief is founded, lies open to all; and the inference that there is such a Being, falls within the reach of the common apprehension of mankind. Upon whatever part of the visible frame of things the attention is fixed, plain tokens of power and wisdom appear, of the same kind¹, but superior to the effects of human

¹ Mr. HUME thinks it very doubtful, whether the human mind contains any thing of a like nature with the Divine; and this he states as a fundamental difficulty. An enquiry into the
nature

strength and ability ; from which it is inferred, that there is some wise and powerful Being,

nature of the Divine Being must undoubtedly be attended with great and insurmountable difficulties ; on which account, this subject seems to have been artfully chosen, in order to raise doubts concerning his *existence* ; thus to entrap the unwary. All that we contend for, on the principles of natural religion, is, that the universe was the work of an intelligent, wise, powerful, benevolent, and independent Being. Though I see no objection to the supposition, that the Divine Mind may contain some attributes, not unlike, in kind, to those possessed by the human. It contains wisdom which is unerring, and power which is unbounded, but still of the same kind as human wisdom and power. To adapt the best means to obtain an end, is an act of wisdom both in God and man. To spare, when a man deserves punishment, is an act of mercy in both. What is imperfect or finite in us, may be perfect or unbounded in the Deity ; and this would tend to connect the Creator more intimately with his works. Accordingly, we find our hypothesis supported by Revelation : “ Be ye merciful, even as your Father, who is in heaven, is merciful.” “ If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” “ Hereby know we, that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.” “ In the image of God created he man.” This must necessarily respect the qualities of the mind, not any corporeal form. There may be perfections in the Deity, which we can imitate ; and these may be joined with others, which we have no powers to copy after. Some perfections may in degree be communicable ; others may not. If you grant that the Divine Mind may perceive that which the human does, and this, I think, cannot be denied, it must be further granted, that there is something *in kind* which is common, however different *in degree*. To those who believe in revealed religion, it may be sufficient to observe, that every precept which enjoins an imitation of God, so far implies powers of a like nature in the creature and Creator, or the words have no meaning. In all this, I can see nothing to be objected to, as inconsistent

superior to Man. And from a further view of the extent of the work ; the variety of objects ; the uniformity of some appearances, and regular variations of others ; the particular ends and uses which we discover, and all subservient to some great end ; all these considered and weighed together, will confirm our former judgment, that there is a great and powerful Being who directs the whole. The works of the creation furnish us with “the evidence of things not seen ;” a conviction of the real existence of those things which are invisible to our corporeal eyes. Though facts of a physical nature, they lead to consequences which impose religious obligations^m. SOLOMON states “the inexcusableness of those who are ignorant of God, and could not, out of the good things that are seen, know *Him* that *is* ; neither by considering the works, did they acknowledge the architect ; for in proportion to the greatness

consistent with that reverence which is due to God. But the Divine Mind undoubtedly contains further attributes, which we have no faculties to comprehend, nor “can it enter into the heart of man to conceive.”

^m “I would recommend to every person, according to his knowledge and abilities, to consider the works of *God*, as *His* works ; to refer all the power, wisdom and goodness in them, to *Him*, as the sole fountain of these ; and to dwell upon the vastness, the lustre, the beauty, the beneficence, which are obvious to vulgar as well as philosophic eyes, till such time as they have raised devotion in the heart.”

and beauty of the creatures, the Creator becomes visible.”

Taking a survey, therefore, of the system which we inhabit, we find ourselves “encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,” that Infidelity must now be left to reap the fruits of it’s own folly. For if the Gentiles were without excuse, because, when they knew God from the works of the creation, they did not worship him, how much stronger does that duty become enforced, by the clearer views of his attributes and perfections, which are now set before us. God discovers himself by regulating the operations of nature according to stated laws; and when he thinks it necessary to favour us with a revelation, he shows himself by a temporary suspension of those laws; a proof, by the bye, that he does not act by necessity. In natural religion, as on every other occasion, we must begin at those things which are plain to be understood; whereas, Infidelity proceeds in a contrary order, beginning with those things which are obscure and hard to be comprehended, and thence concludes, that all religion is vainⁿ. When

ⁿ Mr. HUME, in his “Dialogues on Natural Religion,” takes care to make his speakers advance difficulties which come not within the compass of human ability to give satisfaction upon,
and

Sir I. NEWTON set about investigating the law of gravitation, he did not begin at a remote part of the creation, where he might for ever have wandered in darkness; but he began by experiments at home, and gradually ascended, till he proved the existence of the law throughout the extent of the system which we inhabit. And thus ought we to proceed in deducing a knowledge of God from his works. We must begin at those which furnish the most evident marks of his existence and attributes, and then proceed to trace him through the whole of his operations; and if, at last, any difficulties should arise, it must be considered, that it is only a necessary consequence of our inability to find out God to perfection, and therefore has no tendency to destroy that evidence which is plain and conclusive°. As our views of the creation are, at best, but partial and imperfect, it must necessarily happen, that much of “the wisdom of God will appear foolishness with men.”

and thence concludes, that there is nothing but uncertainty upon the subject. Thus he tries to embarrass, that which he dares not fairly and openly controvert.

° If in all those parts of the creation which we can understand, we discover nothing but the most consummate wisdom, it seems fair to conclude, that in those whose ends we do not comprehend, there exists the same wise plan of government. *Wisdom* relates to the *agent*, not to the *effect*.

If we carry our views to the fixed stars, we are presented with a scene, stupendous indeed and magnificent. It is here that we are dazzled with the splendour of the creation; it is here that God displays himself in the full brightness of his wisdom and power. Here we discover objects rising above each other, overwhelming the mind by their singularity and their magnitude. Viewing the Solar system, even at the nearest fixed star, it dwindles into a point. And from the late improvements of telescopes, discoveries have been made of others, whose distances are greater, beyond the bounds of all calculation. Arrangements of the stars are formed, which present to the eye a picture, whose splendour exceeds all description; and new objects are discovered, which bear no resemblance to any thing in our own system. The small number of fixed stars which the naked eye can discover, are pretty evenly scattered in the heavens; but this is not the case with the generality of those which are discovered by the telescope. Here we find that they are principally disposed in clusters, of which an illustrious astronomer has discovered between two and three thousand^p. Their forms are globular; and many of them are

^p Introduction, Art. 22. 23.

so thickly beset with stars, that those in the middle run, as it were, one into another, and form a central blaze, surrounded by others under the appearance of so many brilliant points. Placed in a profound abyss which no assignable bounds can circumscribe, they lead us up to the "Father of Lights," of whom they themselves are but as a shadow. An accidental arrangement of the stars, cannot account for the phænomena here stated. With the Prophet, therefore, declaring God's omnipotence, we may say, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things; that bringeth out their host by number." "At the commandment of the Holy One they stand in order, and never faint in their watches." It will not be expected, that we should hazard any conjectures upon the cause of, or ends to be answered by, these very extraordinary and wonderful arrangements. Here Reason stops and is confounded. A further revelation of these matters may take place, when we shall no longer "see through a glass darkly." At present, we have only to adore the goodness of that Being, who has favoured us here with such manifestations of his works; and to wait with patience, until "all things hidden, shall be made manifest."

When we consider the immeasurable distance

of the fixed stars, their brightness leads us to conclude, that they are luminous bodies. The very important and delicate discovery of the aberration of their light, shows, that it's velocity is the same as that which comes from the Sun. It is also capable of the same modifications as the solar light, being reflected and refracted according to the same laws. These circumstances are sufficient to convince us, that the Sun and the fixed stars are bodies of the same nature. Several of the fixed stars have been observed to appear and disappear periodically; others are found to have a periodical increase and decrease of brightness, without disappearing. These phænomena cannot, perhaps, be otherwise accounted for, than by supposing, either that these stars are partly opaque, and have a rotation about an axis, or that opaque bodies revolve about them, regularly obscuring, or entirely eclipsing them. Hence, we obtain this important conclusion, that rotations or revolutions are carried on amongst the fixed stars, similar to what take place in our system. Several of the fixed stars are also observed to have proper motions of their own; and it is the opinion of a celebrated astronomer⁹, founded upon observations which undoubtedly

⁹ Introduction, Art. 26.

tend to confirm it, that our Sun, and consequently the whole Solar system, is in motion^r. Admitting this, we get a further analogy between the Sun and the fixed stars. Truly therefore has it been said, that “day presents us with one Sun, night with ten thousand.” This agreement between so many distinct phænomena which are observed in our system, and those of the fixed stars, is abundantly sufficient to prove the unity of the agent; and places under one Being^s the government of the

^r Granting the motion of the Sun, the planets must all have had the *same* adjustments of velocity and direction of their motions. Here must, therefore, have been an adjustment of twenty-nine bodies, both in respect to velocity and direction of motion; for if the system have any assignable velocity, it must have arisen from projection, and not from the weak attraction of the distant bodies in the universe.

^s That the formation of the universe was not a work of chance, but the effect of unbounded power and consummate wisdom, carries evidence in it's favour, which has, upon the mind, the force of demonstration. And, from the uniformity discovered in the operations which are carrying on throughout that very extensive part of the creation, to which we have now access; we have the highest degree of moral certainty, that it was the work of *one* agent. For we either must admit this, or that a unity of counsel prevailed amongst several independent Deities; but the credibility of the latter supposition is set aside by the laws of probability against the existence of several self-existing beings, endued with equal capacities and inclinations, and acting always together as one being; for our examination of the laws and constitution of the heavenly bodies, leads us to this conclusion, that perfect harmony must have prevailed. Distraction in the council, would
not

universe. Thus we are led to conclude, that although “there are diversities of operations,

not have produced perfection in the plan and execution of the work. If you admit one Deity superior to the rest, he becomes the only one God. Revealed Religion however relieves us from all difficulties under which we may labour from the light of nature only, by confirming this great truth; “Hath not *one* God created us?” In favour of Polytheism, Mr. HUME (*Dial. on Nat. Rel.*) argues thus: “A great number of men join in building a house, or a ship: Why may not several Deities combine in contriving and framing a world? This is only so much greater similarity to human affairs.” The argument against the admission of this, we have just stated. But in another part of the same work, Mr. H. himself denies altogether that you can reason from the building of a house, to the formation of the universe. “If we see a house, we conclude that it had an architect, because this is precisely that species of effect which we have experienced to proceed from that species of cause. But surely you will not affirm, that the universe bears such a resemblance to a house, that we can with the same certainty infer a similar cause, or that the analogy is here entire and perfect. The dissimilitude is so striking, that the utmost you can here pretend to, is a guess, a conjecture, a presumption concerning a similar cause.” Here we are taught the great danger of reasoning from the formation of a house, to that of the universe. The fact is; instead of deducing his conclusions from his principles, Mr. H. deduces his principles from his conclusions, assuming the former according to the conclusions which he wants to establish. As an instance of this; upon the question, how far the human mind may contain some attributes of the same kind with the Divine, he advances this position: “*all our ideas* derived from the senses, are confessedly *false* and *illusory* ;” and hence it immediately follows, that they cannot be like any thing in the Divine Mind, where nothing but perfection is to be found. But his position is manifestly false, and could be ventured upon, only for the sake of the conclusion which he wanted to establish.

Mr. HUME'S

it is the same God which worketh all in all;” that “the Lord who by wisdom hath founded the earth, by understanding hath established the heavens.”

The universe is also found to contain phænomena, very unlike to any that we have hitherto described; of which, as they tend further to magnify the power of the Creator, it may not be improper to take notice. With the best glasses, objects have been discovered under the appearance of round, well-defined bodies, of a faint light; some of which have a luminous point situated in the center; and in respect to their magnitude, they cannot be less in diameter than that of our planetary system. But the most remarkable and singular phænomenon is under the form of an elliptical ring, of a magnitude immense, and beyond the power of all calculation^t. From a consideration

Mr. HUME's sophistry may be reduced to three heads:

Requiring demonstrative proofs of first principles.

Assuming definitions and principles, which necessarily lead to the conclusions he wants to establish.

Assuming incompetent principles to prove his positions, and thence concluding that they are incapable of proof. Or, in other words, he takes that view of a subject which involves insuperable difficulties, and then interz, that nothing satisfactory can be obtained upon it.

Upon the phænomena here mentioned, Dr. HERSCHEL has treated the Author with the following observations:

“From

of these stupendous works of the creation, we may observe with the son of SIRACH; "There are yet hid greater things than these be, for we have seen but a few of his works."

When Astronomers, with their best telescopes, penetrate into the depths of the universe, and arrive at the visible boundary of the creation; when apparently nothing is beyond but void space, we might expect darkness to be the termination. In this vast concave expanse, however, there are several faintly-illuminated spots, and one of considerable extent; appearing like openings in the dark back-ground, into more distant regions. And in all these, the boundary of light and darkness is very well defined^u. Whence then the source of this

^u From the angular diameters of my smallest planetary Nebulae, we have reason to conclude, that, even on a supposition of their not being further from us than the nearest fixed star, and admitting the parallax of such a star to be only one second of a degree, their real diameters cannot be less than that of the whole Solar system, including the orbit of the Georgian planet.

"With regard to the elliptical ring, as it probably consists of stars, which is however not perfectly ascertained, it's magnitude must be immense. The remoteness of stars to make them appear almost like nebulosity, is such, that we cannot fix on any magnitude that may belong to them, and we are thus left entirely in the dark as to their distance."

But whether we consider the ring as a solid body, or a collection of stars, the regularity of it's figure affords a very satisfactory proof, that it's formation was not a work of chance

¹ Introduction, Art. 2^d

light? and why confined to parts of the expanse? These are phænomena which put to silence all conjectures respecting their cause; and hence inferring, that many, and perhaps some of the most wonderful works of the creation, may still be hidden from our sight, we may say with the Prophet, “Lo, these are part of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of them!” The extent of our views, great as it now is, probably comprehends but a very small part of the universe. To admit a time when there were no created beings, we must suppose the Deity to have existed an eternity of ages by himself, and inactive; a supposition very hard to be admitted: and if creation had no beginning, it can have no bounds. From the history of the creation, as related by Moses, that “in the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth,” we are not to conclude that the whole universe was then called into existence, probably our own system only; and this is confirmed by observations made with the most improved telescopes, by which, objects have been discovered whose distances are estimated to be such, that their light must have been nearly two millions of years in travelling down to us^x: for that length of time, therefore, we are enabled to trace back

^x Introduction, Art. 27.

the existence of the material creation. "Behold, God is great, and we know him not; neither can the number of his years be searched out." "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made, thou art God from everlasting, and world without end."

Hence, in whatever points of view we take a survey of the creation, we trace the *power*, *wisdom*, and *goodness*, of the Creator. His power in it's formation; his wisdom in the simplicity of the means to produce the ends, as discovered in the system which we inhabit; and his goodness in making those ends subservient to our enjoyment. Thus we are led by our enquiries into the structure of the heavens, to the proofs of the existence and attributes of a Supreme Being, who formed and directs the whole. As the greater part of the bodies which compose the universe, are not visible to the naked eye, we may conclude, that they were not made for our use. And being bodies in all respects like the Sun, from the uniformity of nature in all those parts which we have been able to examine and investigate, we may conclude, that they were created for the same purpose,—that of giving light and heat to the inhabitants of systems of planets surrounding them. We may therefore conceive the universe

to be filled with created beings, enjoying the bounty of their Creator, and adoring his works. This benevolence of the Deity, in giving life to an almost infinite number of beings, must raise our admiration, till we are lost in contemplating his goodness. That every individual should exist under his protection, and be regularly supplied by his all-bountiful hand, with every thing which is necessary for enjoyment, ought to make us very thankful and humble before him. And that every being in the universe should be under his care, and training up here for the further enjoyment of him hereafter, is a thought, which, if duly impressed, would penetrate us with the deepest sense of gratitude to our Creator, and excite us to love and obedience. The disappearance of some stars may be the destruction of those systems, at the times appointed by the Deity, when “the corruptible must put on incorruption, and the mortal must put on immortality;” and the appearance of new stars may be the formation of new systems, for new races of beings, then called into existence, to adore the works of their Creator. Thus may we conceive the Deity to have been employed from all eternity, and thus continue to be employed for endless ages; forming new systems of beings to adore him; and transplanting the upright into the

regions of bliss, where they may have better opportunities of meditating on his works ; and rising in their enjoyments, go on to contemplate system after system, through the boundless universe.

APPENDIX.

SOON after the death of Mr. HUME, an anonymous publication appeared, under the title of “An Apology for the Life and Writings of DAVID HUME, Esq. to do some Service to the *Writer*, and some to the *Man*.” How far it has defended the *Man*, we shall see by a short review of the work.

SECT. 1. *On Mr. HUME's Philosophical Consistency.*—All that is here contended for, is, that “Mr. H. was no hypocrite in philosophy, but a sincere believer in his own sentiments.” His Philosophy may still be very wrong and dangerous, and therefore I do not see that this is any defence of the *Man*. In respect to his belief in his own sentiments, Mr. H. himself assures us (*Treat. on Hum. Nat.* B. 1. sect. 7.) that his philosophical opinions after dinner, were generally different from his opinions before; so little effect had his speculations, even upon his

own mind and practice. Again, "it is an honour to DAVID HUME, that he acted as he wrote." Upon this principle, if a man write against God and his King, Atheism and Treason become honourable. Besides, Mr. HUME himself says quite the contrary. "To whatever length any one may push his speculative principles of scepticism, he must act, I own, and live, and converse, like other men." *Dial. on Nat. Relig.*

SECT. 2. *Of Religious Hypocrisy.*—This is a low and virulent attack upon Revelation, through the lives of some of it's professors, and the author's most shameful misrepresentation of the Scripture account of the attributes of God. If he thought that he was here drawing conclusions against the truth of Revelation from true principles, what must we think of his understanding? if not, what must we think of his honesty? As this section has no reference to Mr. H. it must be considered as a direct attack upon all revealed religion.

SECT. 3. *On the natural Dignity of the Literary Character, and the Reasons which have brought it into Contempt.*—This is only to show, that Mr. H. was never guilty of flattering dedications. So far he was right; but this is only a negative virtue of the very lowest kind. Such a conduct might subsist with a very

lax morality, and with no religion at all. Mr. HUME, however, does not appear to be quite so free from the failing here reprobated, as the Apologist would have us believe: for in the Dedication of his *four Dissertations*, he tells his friend, that “he admires his fine genius; that he has generosity of mind; cordiality of friendship; spirited honour and integrity. That he (Mr. H.) has the ambition to be the first to express his admiration of his noble tragedy of *Douglas*, one of the most interesting and pathetic pieces that was ever exhibited on any theatre; and that it possessed the true theatric genius of *Shakespear* and *Otway*, refined from the unhappy barbarism of the one, and licentiousness of the other.” A flattering dedication cannot, I think, go much further than this.

SECT. 4. *Of Mr. HUME's Principles, and his Motives for making them public; with some Remarks on his last Moments.*—The Reader will be surprised to find, that the Apologist does not here attempt to vindicate Mr. H.'s principles. “I do not, nor shall I presume to say, how far Mr. H.'s philosophy was right or wrong in it's *principle*. Sufficient for my purpose, if I can convince my readers of his *consistency* with himself.” What! separate Mr. H.'s life from his principles? Defend the

former, and give up the latter, when the Apologist himself assures us, that Mr. H. always acted up to his principles? A man of the most pernicious and dangerous principles may act consistently; is consistency then to be esteemed an apology for a man's life and conduct? In respect to his motive for making public his principles, that was "to destroy, what he considers as the prevailing systems of *superstition*," that is, of *all religion*. And speaking of the happy composure of mind in which Mr. H. died, he observes, "Who would not wish, that *their* end may be like *his*?" The same happy composure, that is, contempt of death and insensibility to any thing future, often attends a man at the gallows; who would therefore not wish, that *their* end may be like *his*?

SECT. 5. *Parallel between Mr. HUME and LORD CHESTERFIELD, both with regard to Abilities and Principles.*—With the question of abilities we have no concern; but how it could tend to elevate Mr. HUME's *moral* character (the great and principal thing contended for by the Apologist), to draw a parallel between him and LORD CHESTERFIELD, whom he represents as "the author of a system which seems to have been pillaged from the dancing-master, the perfumer, and the devil," is far above my

comprehension. “The other (Mr. HUME) pursues a philosophy, which, with all its exceptions, gives countenance, neither to the follies of a coxcomb, nor the meanness and mischief of a *hypocrite* (i. e. *Christian*); a *wretch* who perpetrates every baseness, and passes upon the world, as a *mighty good Christian creature*.” So much for the Apologist’s liberality and good manners.

SECT. 6. *Of proper Cautions, prior to the establishment of our Religious Credenda.* — The Christian religion offers itself to be received upon a fair examination; but, wishing to attack Christianity, the Apologist defines *Faith* to be *implicit Obedience*. Divines, I believe, consider *Faith* as *A belief of revealed religion upon reasonable evidence*. It is not unusual for Infidelity to pervert your meaning, and then argue against you. The conclusion of the Apology is in the words of Mr. ADAM SMITH, in his Life of Mr. H. “Though men will, no doubt, judge variously of his philosophical opinions, every one approving or condemning them, according as they coincide or disagree with his own; yet concerning his character and conduct, there can scarce be a difference of opinion.” What conclusion in favour of Mr. H. is hence to be drawn, I cannot divine. There may be no difference of opinion respect-

ing the character and conduct of many men; but it does not thence follow, that they are to be held up as patterns for imitation. There is, I believe, but one opinion about ROBESPIERRE; but I would not, upon that account, guillotine all the principal nobility in England. Of Mr. H.'s practical morality, I know nothing but what the Apologist himself has stated, that, "perhaps it is one of the worst circumstances against Christianity, that very few of it's professors were ever either so moral, so humane, or could so philosophically govern their passions, as the sceptical DAVID HUME." But judging of Mr. H.'s morality from his writings, as we know that his moral *principles* have a very dangerous tendency, and are informed that "his precept and practice went hand in hand together," we are led to conclude, that his moral *conduct* could not have been very pure. When you separate religion from morality, you deprive the latter of it's vital principle.

Such is the substance of the Apology for the great modern champion of Infidelity, as drawn up by his friend; and viewing it in that light, it is fair to suppose that it would set Mr. H.'s principles and character in the most favourable point of view. Had Mr. H. seen this Apology for his life, being, as he himself assures us,

“ a man of mild dispositions, and of command of temper,” it is probable that his observation might have gone no further than this: “ It is not an open enemy that hath done me this dishonour, for then I could have borne it; but it was even thou, my companion, my guide, and mine own familiar friend.”

The Apologist speaks of the “ INCOMPARABLE VOLTAIRE,” putting these words in capitals; but he does not tell us, that, like Mr. HUME, he died as he lived; carefully concealing his miserable state of mind, at the approach of death. Company, business, and pleasure, may banish fear for a time; but those fears will return, when Conscience shall step forward and claim a private audience.

The principles of our author will, I presume, want no further elucidation: and that his Apology has done no honour to the memory of his friend, we may venture to assert, without fear of contradiction.

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